Commentary

Volume Sixty-two, Number Four, October 1976

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Dorothy Rabinowitz

Justice (Again) to Edith Wharton
Cynthia Ozick

Our Latin American Hairshirt
Mark Falcoff

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Performing Abortions

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The Yeshivah World
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BOOKS IN REVIEW
Joseph Shattan
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Gertrude Himmelfarb
Ruth R. Wisse

MUSIC
Bernstein—The Performer as Theorist
Edward Rothstein

MOVIES
Altman, Chabrol, and Ray
William S. Pechter

Israel & the United States: Norman Podhoretz and Critics

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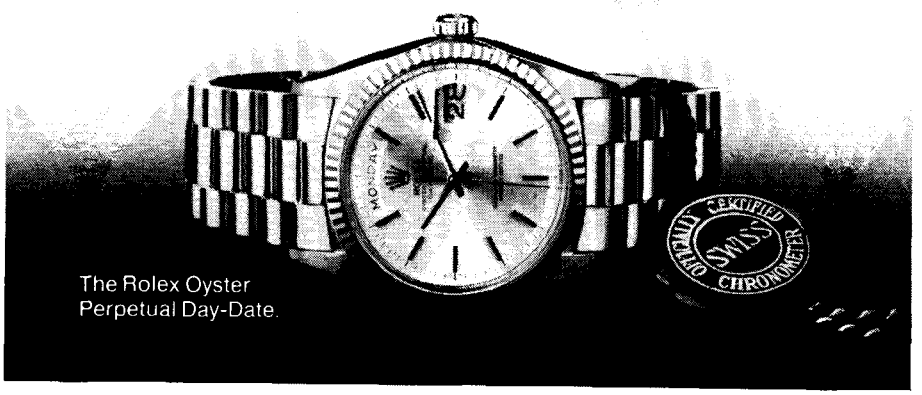

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Commentary

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Associate Editor: Brenda Brown
Contributing Editors: Robert Alter, Milton Himmelfarb, Walter Laqueur
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COMMENTARY is published monthly by the American Jewish Committee—Single copy is $2.00, $20 a year; 3 years $54; 5 years $80—Add $4.00 per year for all foreign, including Canada and Latin America—Second class postage paid at New York, N.Y. and at additional mailing offices.

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Ice-Proof Scotch

What is the ideal proof for a Scotch whisky? That depends on the way the whisky is consumed and the palate of the individual. Scotch drinkers are finding that Famous Grouse, the only 90-Proof Scotch, is the ideal proof and blend for consuming "on the rocks." It's America's first Ice-Proof Scotch.

by Allen Mac Kenzie

Perhaps the most elusive quality of any Scotch whisky is the ability to retain freshness as it dilutes with ice. While no Scotch can be totally "ice-proof," it can be demonstrated that a 90-Proof Scotch will sustain its freshness substantially longer than Scotches bottled at 80, 86, or 86.8 Proof.

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As you might expect, the proof falls rapidly during the first few minutes of cooling, but more slowly after the whisky is chilled. The diagram shows how long it takes Scotches of three different proofs to reach 45 proof when poured over ice. If proof is considered to be a measure of freshness, 90-Proof *Famous Grouse* has a 3½ minute advantage over 86.8-Proof Scotch after 18 minutes on the rocks. (Because it takes 3½ minutes longer to reach 45 proof.) Its advantage over 80-Proof Scotch is 8½ minutes.

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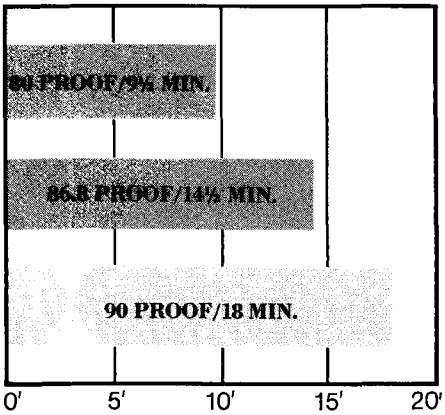
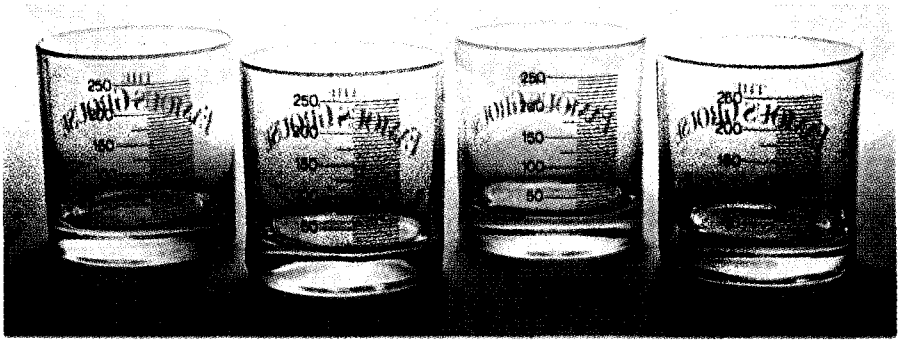
Graphs and calculations can carry you only so far in the search for a perfect Scotch

on the rocks. The ultimate experiment requires that you pour a portion of *Famous Grouse* over ice and submit the decision to your palate. In the words of the great bard, Robert Burns:

"From scenes like these,
Old Scotland's grandeur springs."



TIME IT TAKES THREE DIFFERENT SCOTCHES TO DILUTE TO 45 PROOF WHEN POURED OVER ICE (IN MINUTES.)



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Letters from Readers

Israel and the United States

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I was emotionally moved by Norman Podhoretz's article, "The Abandonment of Israel" [July], nearly to tears. Each day, in and out of the halls of Congress, I see the validity of his statements concerning this abandonment. I constantly say to myself, how can it be? What has happened to the world's conscience? And then as a precursor of what would be in store for Israel were it to rely on that conscience is what has occurred in Lebanon, where an Arab-Christian minority, surrounded by multi-millions of Arab Muslims, teeters on the brink of disaster, if not genocide. And the entire Christian world, from the Vatican to the United States, has sat mutely by and allowed those who seek the Islamization of that beleaguered community to go forward without even raising their voices, let alone their arms to stop that continuing tragedy. Fortunately, the Christian community is receiving assistance from Syria for complex reasons—because it is in Syria's interest at the moment to help Lebanon and repress terrorists who, after destroying the Christian community, would become a cancer within the Syrian state itself. Lebanon is also receiving help from Israel which recognizes its identification with a small, beleaguered people, and the tragedy and genocide that would occur if that Christian minority were overrun. In the mysterious ways that the Almighty works, it is nice to report that at the writing of this letter [early July] the Christian minority is at the moment in the successful role of David against Goliath.

But if the Christian world would not speak up for, nor assist, their Christian brothers and sisters in Lebanon, what would they do if the Jews of Israel were on the brink of a comparable catastrophe? The answer, I suggest, is nothing. Perhaps some ships would be sent to take the survivors from its shores, but little more. Is it any wonder that Israel will not agree to the return of occupied territory unless and until it is assured of a true peace involving the exchange of ambassadors and all other peaceful and commercial exchanges that exist among nations that don't seek each other's destruction?

Not long ago an Italian-American who is a member of Congress and a good friend of mine asked me how many Jews there are in Congress. "Twenty-two," I replied. "How many of you are there?" I asked. "Thirty-eight," he said. "And what do you do when you get together?" I asked him. "Well, mostly we eat," he replied, laughing. I thought to myself, would that we Jews had the kind of climate that permitted us to say the same. Instead, the fact is that mostly we meet to prevent catastrophe.

EDWARD I. KOCH
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . "The Abandonment of Israel" is the most incisive analysis of Israel's situation I have seen in years—and the most frightening. . . . I altogether agree with Norman Podhoretz's view of the situation. . . .

ARNOLD FORSTER
Anti-Defamation League
of B'nai B'rith
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Norman Podhoretz's essay articulated precisely the growing apprehension felt by many of us concerning United States and European policy toward Israel. Especially illuminating was his analysis of the growing detachment from reality of many intellectuals. This detachment sometimes reaches the point of stunning inversions of political fact, a stage preliminary to a moral inversion by means of which the destruction of Israel can be made to seem "just." However, in his reference to an Israeli "Samson complex" it seems to us that Mr. Podhoretz inadvertently supported one of the mechanisms whereby such detachment from reality takes place: namely, inappropriate psychologizing.

There is nothing of a "complex" in Israel's accumulation of nuclear weapons and its determination to use them, if necessary, in the interest of self-preservation, even at the risk of global nuclear war. This policy, it strikes us, is a combination of courage and *Realpolitik*: the great powers, particularly the United States, realize that not only their moral integrity but their very survival may well be linked to Israel's. What other policy is reasona-

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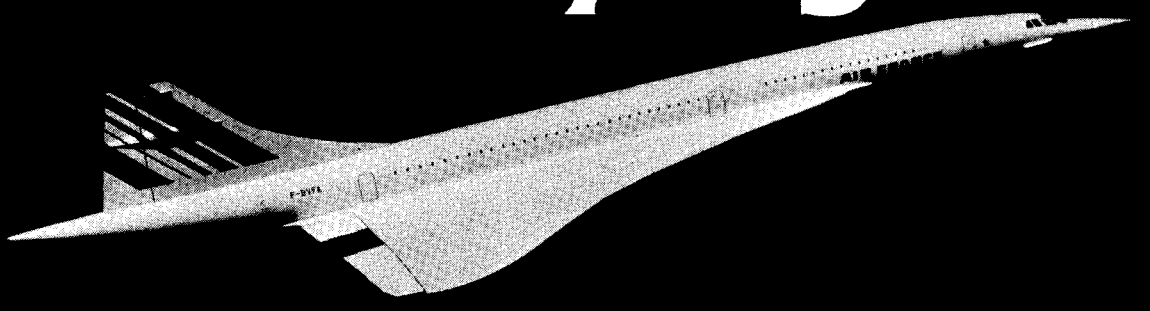

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Here are some examples of situations that you pay for.

In many parts of the country the cost of a hospital room (not including doctors, special nurses and medicine) is approaching $200 per day.

A $4,438 automobile costs $19,979 when bought part by part as your repair shop must do, according to the Journal of American Insurance.

In some parts of the country the burning of automobiles in order to collect insurance has reached near-epidemic proportions.

In the area of medical malpractice suits, in one state, ten times as many million-dollar awards have been made since 1970 as in all the years before. (You may want to go over that one again.) The growing volume of such suits is adding more than $3 billion to the nation's annual cost of health care, according to HEW.

During a recent five-year period the average claim settlement in product liability cases has increased by 300%. The resultant astronomical liability protection costs have put some manufacturing companies out of business and threaten still others.

Despite higher premiums, the insurance industry, last year alone, had an underwriting loss of over $4 billion in casualty-property lines.

These are only the direct costs and their effects. The indirect effects hit every one of us, in the form of higher product prices, higher costs for health care, unavailability of needed goods and services, in hundreds of ways, in every sector of our lives.

The next manufactured

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we raised our voice

product you buy may cost many dollars more because the manufacturer's liability protection costs shot up. Further, these are dollars that might have gone for engineering improvements that could have lengthened its life.

Or your doctor bills. In many cases they've gone up because of rising malpractice premiums. And there are indications they'll go even higher as doctors are forced to turn more and more to the practice of "defensive" medicine. That is, taking X rays, ordering diagnostic tests, etc., etc., etc., when there may be little recognized medical need for them.

Who's at fault? We're all at fault. How else could it happen?

But that isn't the point. The point is, none of us can go on pretending it isn't happening.

Is it hopeless? We don't think so. In fact, all indications are that this country is stirring itself awake. And we intend to continue to raise our voice on these matters. Because the more you know about the problems, the more likely we can all work together toward effective solutions.

We're working with government agencies, industry associations, and private companies to do what we can to solve these problems. But we need your help. We'd like to know what you think and how you feel about insurance-related problems. And we'll share our ideas on these issues with you. Just drop a letter to our Office of Consumer Information, One Tower Square, Hartford, Conn. 06115.

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ble for a small nation surrounded by enemies, and in danger of abandonment by its "friends"? This fundamental reality is unnecessarily blurred by the invocation of a "complex," which might make it appear that Israel could be "driven crazy." Such "psychological" thinking is the mirror image of that which once held the Arab "ego" to be sensitive to "humiliation." United States policy must be based not on Israeli or Arab "complexes," but on the ground-level realities of the situation, which now include Israeli nuclear potential. . . .

[Dr.] Daniel Birger
[Dr.] Stephen Rittenberg
[Dr.] Sheldon Roth
[Dr.] Herbert Wyman
[Dr.] Jack Terry

New York City

[*The signers of this letter are psychoanalysts on the faculties of Cornell Medical School, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, and Harvard Medical School.*—Ed.]

To the Editor of Commentary:

In an otherwise perceptive article, Norman Podhoretz writes that "No one doubts any longer that they [Israel] have such [nuclear] weapons." I and a number of others at the Hudson Institute, where I am a consultant, firmly believe that Israel does *not* have nuclear weapons. Our opinion is based on an analysis of the possible value of nuclear weapons to Israel as well as private conversations with a number of highly placed Israelis.

The public position of Israel's leaders on the question of nuclear weapons has been clear-cut and unchanged for years: Israel will not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons into the Middle East. One would tend to discount these statements—if Israel had nuclear weapons, would it tell anyone about them?—except that from almost every consideration, economic, military, political, and strategic, developing nuclear weapons seems unwise for Israel.

Israelis are by far the most heavily taxed citizens of the world. Over a third of Israel's GNP is already devoted to national defense. One should not expect Israel to expend much of its resources on an expensive nuclear-weapons program unless to do so would greatly improve its military strength.

However, given the relatively small numbers and yields of any Israeli nuclear force in the foreseeable future, the only efficient use of such weapons would be to attack enemy cities. Yet a counter-city war, with large numbers of civilian fatalities, is anathema to Israel. Moreover, with most of its population concentrated around Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and Haifa, Israel would probably suffer greater losses in such a war than its Arab opponents.

Nor would nuclear weapons serve as a truly effective deterrent against Arab attacks. Inevitably, especially given their oil riches, the Arabs will acquire their own nuclear weapons. Any number of undeterrable attacks could occur. For example, Libya might allow the PLO to "steal" a nuclear weapon. In 1973, one should not forget, perceived total Israeli military superiority did not prevent Egypt and Syria from attacking Israel.

While the benefits of an Israeli nuclear-weapons program seem low, the costs are quite high. An extensive nuclear program would strain Israel's limited financial resources and pool of scientific talent. The political costs, however, would far outweigh the economic costs. The United States would be very upset by an Israeli nuclear-weapons program. Strains far beyond those seen to date could lead to a basic change in the United States' support for Israel.

Arab nations would immediately begin the search for nuclear weapons of their own. This could force them to rely on the Soviet Union for nuclear expertise and/or weapons. Just what price the Soviet Union would exact in return is not clear. The consequences are not likely to be favorable to Israel and/or the cause of peace in the area.

One suspects that Mr. Podhoretz has been misled by recurrent news reports of Israeli "bombs." The CIA, apparently, does believe that Israel has nuclear weapons. But there is no indication of what basis they have for their belief. Conceivably, prudent Israeli planners may

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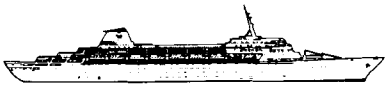
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have taken steps to guarantee that nuclear weapons could be deployed "in time," were menacing events looming on the horizon, and the CIA may have misinterpreted these actions as evidence that Israel had already deployed such weapons.

It is also possible, however, that the CIA estimate is an example of "worst-case" analysis of the worst type. Israel has the scientific skills and access to radioactive material necessary for nuclear weapons. The CIA may have just calculated how many nuclear weapons Israel could have built, without examining what motivations it would have had to do so.

Time has also joined the ranks with a story of Israel hastily building nuclear weapons—at the start of the October 1973 war. Alas, *Time* did not provide a shred of evidence to substantiate its wild story.

Clearly, no amount of analysis of public pronouncements can guarantee that Israel does not have nuclear weapons. But given the lack of any clear-cut political or military utility to Israel of nuclear weapons, the strong burden of proof should rest on those who insist Israel's leaders speak falsely when they state Israel does not have nuclear weapons.

EDWARD S. BOYLAN
Department of Mathematics
Rutgers University
Newark, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Even though I am neither Jewish nor in tune with COMMENTARY's . . . compassionate liberalism, I have to say amen to Norman Podhoretz's article, if only for coldbloodedly geopolitical reasons. . . .

The United States has a debt of honor as well as a commanding role to play in insuring the survival of Israel as our only solid outpost in the Near East. If we were "led" by fewer dilettantes like William Scranton (who seems to be the Ripon Society's answer to Henry Kissinger) and by more hard-souled realists like Daniel P. Moynihan and/or James R. Schlesinger, we might expand that outpost into a Balkan-Near East alliance—Yugoslavia, Turkey, Israel—that could reestablish the necessary deterrent to Soviet ambitions in that sector.

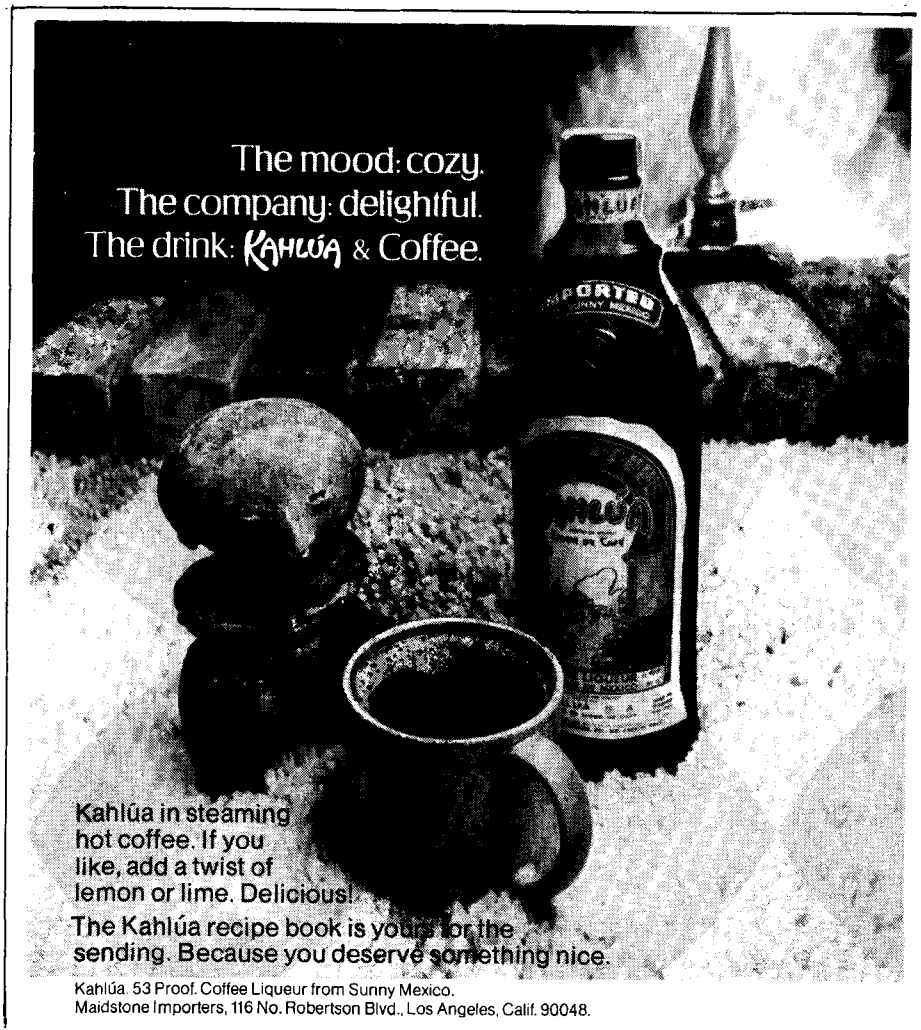
W. R. DAVIDSON
Alamosa, Colorado

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Prophecy in this fast-moving world is hazardous. When Norman Podhoretz wrote "The Abandonment of Israel" . . . he could not have foreseen Israel's meteoric rise in popularity after her triumph over hijacking in Uganda. Nor does he say anything about the Lebanese tragedy, which King Hussein described as "disastrous," . . . saying that the PLO had weakened, "perhaps irreparably, its argument that Jews, Muslims, and Christians could live in harmony side-by-side in a future greater Palestine."

Mr. Podhoretz's thesis is based on a dissection of the UN speeches on the anti-Zionist resolution, where even Israel's friends spoke with muffled voices. He fears that the United States will surrender to the next oil embargo and in the conflict for influence with the Soviet Union. But Mr. Podhoretz ignores the steady improvement in U.S.-Israeli relations since 1948, when U.S. officials tried to abort Israel's birth. Consider the following: In 1951 Israel won U.S. economic aid. In 1962 it finally won defensive military equipment—the anti-aircraft Hawk missile. During the Johnson years it gained deterrent military equipment—tanks, A-4 Skyhawks and Phantom jets; and more sophisticated equipment—much of it in grants—was rushed to Israel in 1973. In 23 years, total aid to Israel, most of it in loans, was approximately $4 billion. Since 1973, however, U.S. aid has exceeded $7.5 billion. Foreign aid has never received such majorities on Capitol Hill.

In addition it should be noted that after years of competing for Arab favor at the UN, our delegation cast its first veto of a pro-Arab resolution in 1972 and has vetoed often since; the United States has held up funding for agencies which adopt pro-Arab initiatives; the mild-mannered William Scranton praised Israel's "blood and guts" at the Security Council on July 12, and Western, and even some African, countries rallied to Israel's cause; Israel won accolades at the recent Democratic Convention. . . . Mr. Podhoretz rightly argues that the pressures on Israel to make concessions should be reversed and directed at the Arabs. Whether Israel should agree at all to negotiate interim agreements is debatable, for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all too many liken it to a "slice-by-slice Munich." But Israeli leaders like Dayan, Meir, and Rabin all favored it, hopeful that their own conciliatory spirit would be reciprocated. . . .

True, the United States has failed to conserve and develop oil resources and might be vulnerable to an oil embargo. But even though top oil-company executives in 1973 threatened to blame Israel for shortages, only a minuscule fraction did so. And Candidate Carter recently told *Meet the Press* that we would not yield to a second embargo. We would counterattack: "We would not ship them food, weapons, spare parts for weapons, no oil drilling rigs, no oil pipes, no nothing!"

In short, there is good reason to believe that America has turned its back on the 1938 appeasement of Munich, when so many believed that we were protected by two oceans. . . .

I. L. KENEN
Near East Research
Washington, D. C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . I was both impressed and depressed by "The Abandonment of Israel," but found even its depressing effect salutary. Just as there exist self-fulfilling prophecies, so do there exist also preventive prophecies. Norman Podhoretz's article obviously belongs to the second group. . . .

But as one who shares Mr. Podhoretz's fears and nightmares, I have to point out that a few days after the July issue of COMMENTARY reached its subscribers, the Democratic Convention took place, and with it the nomination of Jimmy Carter. How does this affect Mr. Podhoretz's analysis? Though he carefully avoids attributing to the present President or his Secretary of State any specific roles in the abandonment of Israel . . . it is possible that "Washington" after 1976 may constitute a completely different ball game. . . . There may be a new President and a new Secretary of State . . . and even leaving aside electioneering promises, there is nothing in Mr. Carter's past which would justify the assumption that he will make the abandonment of Israel a part of *his* foreign policy. . . .

Two other factors, both subsequent to the appearance of Mr. Podhoretz's article, have perhaps diminished the impact which it deserves. . . . One is the beating Arafat's organization has received in the past months . . . which has diminished—as I believe, prematurely—apprehensions about the gradual trend in the present administration to extend respectability and legitimacy to the PLO. The second factor is Israel's unprecedented rescue operation in Uganda which put to shame a whole world that responded to Arab terrorism with a shrug. . . . and seems to have changed the climate of opinion somewhat.

But history is not a short-range proposition. Though Mr. Podhoretz's warnings were followed by an upsurge in Israel's popularity unparallelled since the Six-Day War, most of the basic premises of his article remain intact. . . . Unpleasant truths may seem inopportune during an "up" period, but can be ignored only at Israel's peril.

BENNO WEISER VARON
Brookline, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Norman Podhoretz's article grapples with the foremost problem to face the American Jewish community. . . . However, we would like to take issue with some of his arguments . . . [and his] one-sided approach of defending Israel as if it could do no wrong. . . . He has reiterated the standard Israeli line, which isn't even accepted by some prominent Israelis.

Even more disturbing is Mr. Podhoretz's extreme view that any criticism of Israel would result in "policies which were calculated to strengthen the hands of [its] enemies." We cannot believe he would condemn constructive criticism of any country; after all, Israel, like the United States, is one of the few countries left in the world where there is still freedom of speech. Is any purpose being served by putting all the blame on the U.S. and the rest of the world? . . . Wouldn't public opinion be even more open to Israel if people didn't feel that the issues were being whitewashed?

Mr. Podhoretz could have better served the needs of Israel as well as the American Jewish community by being more realistic and less sensational. For example, his inflammatory analogies between Israel and Vietnam and Israel and Czechoslovakia seem to prey upon people's insecurities and paranoia. The term "Vietnamization of Israel" sounds far-fetched, for Israel is not totally dependent upon the U.S.

The conclusion of the article left us with a feeling of despair and hopelessness since it completely rules out any present or future policy in bringing about a secure Jewish state. If all possibilities are discredited—Sadat's statements recognizing Israel, a written guaranteed settlement, a joint Soviet-American guarantee, and even an American-mediated and guaranteed peace settlement—then what is left for Israel? Since Israel must be somewhat dependent upon a greater world power . . . isn't it better for that power to be the United States rather than the Soviet Union? Isn't it better for the United States to act as the mediator and call the shots? . . .

The statement that "the new American policy in the Middle East is not only immoral and ineffective but mortally dangerous as well" is quite rash, for no specific examples are given to back it up. Does it refer to Kissinger's Middle East shuttle diplomacy, to Moynihan's position in the UN, to American shipment of planes to Israel? All of these policies seem . . . to show definite support for Israel. . . .

It is disheartening that Mr. Podhoretz chose to write in terms of the worst to come, instead of what we can do to achieve peace.

JEAN ORANSKY
RACHEL FIGA
Somerville, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I can think of no other way to express my appreciation of Norman Podhoretz's magnificent, if frightening (read, accurate), analysis . . . than to say thank you for sounding the alarm publicly.

HERBERT TARR
Brooklyn, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Norman Podhoretz discerns a serious decline in American support for Israel, . . . but he is mistaken. American support for Israel's independence remains strong. In this respect, the Ford administration has not faltered, and Jimmy Carter believes Israel's survival to be "a moral imperative."

Still, something is happening. In and out of government American supporters of Israel, both Jewish and non-Jewish, increasingly distinguish between support of Israel's independence and support of Israel's retention of the occupied ter-

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ritories. More than two-thirds of the respondents to the Foreign Policy Association's Great Decisions '76 program recognize the right of the Palestinian Arabs to an independent state.

Although the basic obstacle to peace is still the refusal of the Arab states and the Palestinian Arabs to accept Israel—within any borders—as a legitimate expression of the Jewish people's right to self-determination, more and more Americans regard Israel as intransigent. Unfortunately, Israel's twin policies of settling the occupied territories and of denying the Palestinian Arabs a right to self-determination alongside Israel, contribute to the illusion that Israel values the territories above peace.

Israeli policy has failed to dispel this illusion, just as it has failed to respond adequately to its friends' distinction between independence and expansion, or to the fact that Americans are afraid of another Vietnam, troubled by large overseas expenditures, and under increasing economic and political pressure to achieve a settlement acceptable to the Arabs.

. . . Israel can still solidify American support and shift to the Arabs the burden of demonstrating their supposed willingness to make peace. Let Israel declare its willingness to withdraw from substantially all the occupied territories as part of a comprehensive peace settlement; let it declare its recognition of the Palestinian Arabs' right to self-determination, including national sovereignty, compatible with Israel's right to independence and security; and let it declare its readiness to negotiate with representatives of the Palestinian Arabs who will have recognized Israel and forsworn anti-Israel terrorism. In return, let Israel demand of the Arabs acceptance of Israel's legitimate existence as a Jewish state; normalization of relations; demilitarization of the territories from which Israel withdraws; and anti-terrorism measures.

Most Americans believe these are Israel's legitimate rights. If the Arabs will not give Israel the basic components of peace in exchange for the territories, Arab intransigence will be revealed, and Israel's American support will be strengthened. If the Arabs show a genuine interest in peace, an end to the conflict may be achieved. . . .

DAVID A. GUBERMAN
Newton, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . There is all too much truth in everything Norman Podhoretz says. What can be done to turn the tide and awaken the conscience of the world (if in fact it has not atrophied)? . . .

GILBERT J. BAKER
Houston, Texas

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I find Norman Podhoretz's closing sentence—about blame adhering to those who have not made Israel's survival "the primary aim of their policies and the primary wish of their hearts"—obsessive and excessively fearful. I recall similar words from General Grivas when he was fighting both British and Turkish troops in Cyprus. A British journalist . . . said at the time that it was likely that his fight would ruin NATO and bring Russian hegemony to that part of the world. The General replied that he didn't care about the larger consequences, including World War III. All that he cared about was the removal of the British and Turks from Cyprus. I find no moral, humane, or strategic superiority in the aims and arguments of Mr. Podhoretz. I should add that it was the hysteria and stupidity of Greek generals and politicians that made the cause of the Greeks more hopeless than ever in Cyprus. So Mr. Podhoretz's vision harms . . . Israel more than it helps.

I opposed the founding of the state of Israel because I predicted it would lead to many wars with a rising Arab nationalism. Israel's coming into existence in 1948 was as foolish as our stepping into Asian empire-building at the moment when the British and French had the sense to step out. . . .

Israel will continue to exist, I think, as did those Christian enclaves in the Holy Land founded by the Crusaders. (The civil war in Lebanon is an attempt to dislodge the last one, after a thousand years.) And the U.S. will continue to support Israel in that long struggle for many reasons: there are few Arab voters here; we like brave underdogs; it is a healthy democracy; it appeals to our biblical values, among both Christians and Jews. . . . Small states are always in danger, but Israel has Uncle Sam's safety net, woven of green and growing strands of money.

JAMES C. WHITE
College of Art and Design
Minneapolis, Minnesota

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I haven't read an article that moved me as deeply since the somber days of Munich, when my private world fell apart. I vividly recall the contempt I felt for the naive Neville Chamberlain and his ever-present umbrella.

. . . The Yom Kippur War brought out a woeful lack of unity in the West—its moral courage left something to be desired. We fervently pray that oil will not be the cause of America's retreat from its traditional friendship with Israel.

JULES D'ARNCOURT
Arlington, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Congratulations to Norman Podhoretz for "The Abandonment of Israel." I would like to add two points to the argument.

First of all, the term "occupied territory" has been applied to the West Bank by the United Nations, the media, and friends and enemies of Israel only since 1967. The fact is that the West Bank, including Jerusalem, was allotted to the Arabs for an independent Arab state by the United Nations partition of 1947. The Israelis accepted, but the Arabs did not, and Jordan conquered the area in the war of 1948. In 1950, Jordan annexed the West Bank, and this annexation was only recognized *de jure* by Pakistan and Great Britain. However, although the West Bank was indeed occupied territory from 1948 to 1967, only Israel's occupation seemed to arouse any international concern. The adjectives "expansionist" and "territorialist" were also reserved for Israel only. The fact that the Israelis have shown themselves to be rather humane conquerors—witness the improvement in health, industry, and commerce, as well as the elections in the West Bank—seems to elude the critics of Israel. . . . Well-intentioned organizations like Breira have emerged, which urge Israel to take risks that no other nation in the world would be asked to consider.

Secondly, if Kissinger considers negotiating over Israel's survival an act of "extraordinary cynicism," how would he define the outright doublecrossing of the Kurds? The Kurds were promised autonomy by Woodrow Wilson, the Treaty of Sèvres, and, ironically, by the Iraqi constitution of 1958. Both America and Iran promoted their struggle for independence, but when Iran

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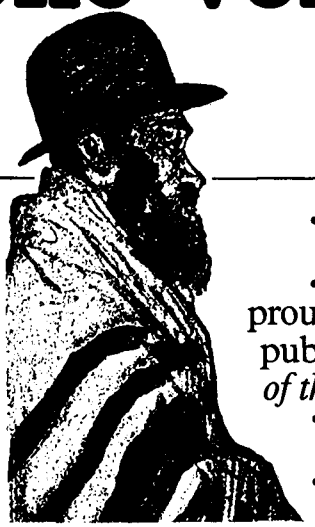

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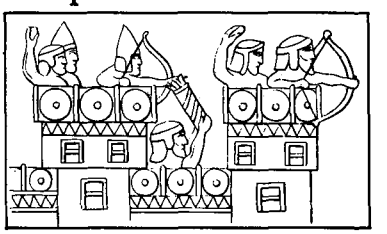

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and Iraq temporarily settled their border problems, the Kurds were abandoned to possible genocide. To be sure, the Kurds have no lobby in Washington, so this was an act of rather ordinary cynicism.

RUTH KING

New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Norman Podhoretz's thorough analysis failed to mention that Israel is caught between two quite different foreign-policy approaches. The United States seeks to maintain relative peace at the cost of concessions so that business can be conducted at a profit. In contrast, the Soviet Union seeks to incite conflicts and confrontations which will force the United States to back down or withdraw and will spread the influence of the Soviet system.

The current attack against Israel centering on charges of Nazism, racism, and white imperialism is orchestrated beyond the abilities of the Arabs. For many years Soviet propagandists have been exploiting Arab hatred for Israel to advance Soviet interests among the Arabs. . . . Once war broke out in the Middle East it was Soviet prodding that first moved the Arabs to boycott oil shipments to the U.S., damaging the U.S. economy severely.

Only if the Israeli-Arab conflict is seen in the context of a Soviet/U.S. confrontation does the Soviet-orchestrated propaganda attack make any sense. James R. Schlesinger is quite right in calling the process the Vietnamization of Israel . . . but Israel is to be a sacrificial victim in this scenario, not a principal actor. It is between the Soviet Union and the U.S. that the real action is taking place, with the Soviets advancing and the U.S. being prepared for a withdrawal that will be reluctant but presented as necessary to protect the steady flow of Middle East oil that supports the U.S. economy. . . .

What can be done? The first act is to expose the Soviet hand. And not just in generalities, but in specifics. What is the Soviet Union actually doing in the Middle East, in Africa, in Western Europe? What is the U.S. doing to counter the Soviets? Which set of forces is rising and advancing and which is declining and withdrawing?

. . . Within twelve months we will see a shift in foreign-policy goals and management. As new goals are being formulated, the time will have come to plunge

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through the confusing surface turbulence of affairs in the Middle East and into the dark depths where the realities lie. . . .

DONALD L. MILLER
Alexandria, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In using the controversy surrounding the adoption by the United Nations, last November 10, of General Assembly Resolution 3379 (whose operative paragraph determined Zionism to be "a form of racism and racial discrimination") to begin his article, Norman Podhoretz equated this invidious UN pronouncement with the anti-Zionism of the "Declaration of Mexico on the Equality of Women and Their Contribution to Development and Peace, 1975," adopted at the World Conference of the International Women's Year held at Mexico City, June 19 to July 2, 1975. The Declaration of Mexico was, however, rather more blunt than Resolution 3379. It did not include the assertion that Zionism was of the same cloth as racism and racial discrimination; instead, it called for the "elimination" of "zionism" [*sic*] as well as colonialism, neo-colonialism, imperialism, foreign occupation, apartheid, and all forms of racial discrimination.

At the United Nations last fall, Cuba, Democratic Yemen, Libya, Somalia, and Syria introduced in the Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural Committee amendments to a draft resolution relating to the "Decade for Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination" that would have added the word "Zionism" to references to apartheid, colonialism, racial discrimination, etc., in the manner of the Declaration of Mexico. (On the same day Idi Amin, in his address to the General Assembly, called for the extinction of Israel—a call faithful to the Declaration of Mexico.) On October 15, Somalia announced, on behalf of the co-sponsors, that the anti-Zionist amendments introduced on October 1 were to be withdrawn in favor of a new draft resolution, and it is the text of this draft that became Resolution 3379.

Of course, Resolution 3379 seeks to—and does—echo the Declaration of Mexico's call for the elimination of Zionism, and the fact that the sponsors of the October 1, 1975 anti-Zionist amendments were forced to settle for a step-by-step approach to the language of the Declaration of Mexico offers only small consolation to Israel. But what has been lost sight of in the 3379 controversy has been the aim of the sponsors of the text who, in all likelihood, were less interested in determining Zionism to be a form of racism and racial discrimination than in coming up with a "compromise" approach that, nevertheless, continued to put the United Nations on record as favoring the elimination of Zionism, that is to say, Israel.

Mr. Podhoretz is quite right to point out that Resolution 3379 . . . denounces "the state of Israel itself as an illegitimate entity" and it remains incredible that an international organization, charged with working for international peace and security, should have adopted this denunciation for its own. Last fall, however, the focus of concern

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was whether Israel would be suspended from the General Assembly as was South Africa in 1974. It is arguable that Israel would have done better to have been suspended than smeared with the 3379 formula; suspension would have attested less to Israel's isolation than to her inability to get a fair hearing at the United Nations. . . .

Though Resolution 3379 . . . makes it quite clear that Israel has already been abandoned by the UN, it has not so been abandoned by the United States which has steadfastly refused to participate, since adoption of 3379, in the work of the Decade for Action to Combat Racism which, as of November 10, 1975, was transformed into an instrument to combat Zionism. . . .

Although voices have been heard in the United States—and have every right to be heard—which would subordinate Israel's existence to commercial ties with Arab states, the refusal by the United States government to participate in the Decade for Action to Combat Racism seems a rather good indicator that Washington remains Israel's staunch ally. . . .

DAVID R. ZUKERMAN
Bronx, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I read Norman Podhoretz's monumental study with deep interest. . . . It will hurt to see his words go unnoticed by a world threatened with barbarism. . . .

[Rabbi] DOV RAPAPORT
Brooklyn, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . I feel sure that Mr. Podhoretz is correct in assuming that when (not if) Israel feels that its back is to the wall, it will use any weapons at its command, either in an attempt to dissuade the Arabs from genocide, or to make the effort as costly as possible. The example of Samson seems more in line with today's Israeli temper than that of Masada—perhaps Bar Kokhba and Samson together would be more accurate.

It is therefore to the advantage of those who would abandon Israel to reflect on the results of what Israel might do in terms of their own self-interest. . . .

The West fears a cutoff of oil by the Arabs—they are blackmailing the industrial world quite successfully. What the West has thus far not appreciated, however, is that Israel too can resort to blackmail, and with the same weapon. . . .

When Israel has its back to the wall, and feels abandoned by the West, will it be loath to take any actions which would be inimical to the interests of the countries that it feels have betrayed it? Would it hesitate to destroy all of the Arab oil refineries and oil fields it can reach just because that would hurt Japan, Germany, Austria, France, Italy, and Spain? If Israel destroyed the refineries, it would take years to rebuild the infrastructure of the petroleum industry. The economic and social costs would be incalculable. Israel would already have paid its share of the price for the betrayal and the West would then begin to pay its share, just as it paid with World War II for the Czech betrayal at Munich. The big winners would be the Russians, since they would not only control the Middle East, but a bankrupt Western Europe as well. . . .

Myopic politicians and businessmen should consider the potential consequences of cornering Israel—not for Israel alone, but in their own best interests. If morality doesn't suffice, think of the money.

[Dr.] LAWRENCE W. FRIEDMANN
Woodside, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Is Israel, as Norman Podhoretz contends, being "Vietnamized," and, little by little, abandoned by the U.S.?

If Israel *is* lost, it was lost in Vietnam. And Vietnam was lost in the ivory towers of academe, in the newsrooms of NBC, CBS, and ABC, in the New York *Times*, the Washington *Post*, and their fellow-traveling journals, and in the liberal halls of Congress.

The arguments used by these public-opinion molders, who have dominated American political thought for some decades, convinced the American people to fight a no-win war in Vietnam, to withdraw because a no-win war could not be won, and, finally, to abandon our South Vietnamese allies.

The American people, having learned the "lessons of Vietnam" from these mentors, are now applying them to Israel.

Lesson: The U.S. had no "vital interest" to defend in Vietnam. North Vietnam presented no military, economic, or political threat to America. The U.S. had nothing material to gain by its intervention, and nothing material to lose if North Vietnam won.

Application: We have no vital interest in Israel. The only threat that Israel's enemies, the Arabs, present to us is another oil embargo. This threat would not exist if we did not persist in supporting Israel. We have nothing material to gain by supporting Israel—and much to lose.

Lesson: Responsible and moral American leadership cannot ignore world opinion. Our unilateral military support of South Vietnam defied world opinion. It was not supported by our NATO allies, it weakened the Western alliance, and it turned the Third World nations against us.

Application: The U.S. is the only government in the entire world supporting the Israeli cause against the Arabs. Our unilateral support brought on the oil embargo and was a shattering blow to the economies of the West and, consequently, to the Western alliance. It is costing us the friendship of the Third World.

Lesson: Vietnam was split in two by the Western powers in the post-World War II period. The Vietcong and North Vietnamese were patriots who had been struggling ever since to reunify their country. The U.S. lost moral credibility by ignoring the justice of their cause.

Application: Israel was carved out of Arab lands by a Western-dominated UN in the post-World War II period. The Palestinians, Syrians, and Egyptians are patriots who have been struggling ever since to get back some of their lost lands. We cannot, as a moral people, ignore the justice of their cause.

Lesson: *Peace* was South Vietnam's greatest need. "The killing had to stop." A U.S.-engineered truce (compromises, of course, had to be made by the South Vietnamese) would set the stage for U.S. withdrawal, and the peace so sorely needed by South Vietnam. Afterward, the U.S. would supply South Vietnam with the means to defend itself. But if North Vietnam broke the truce, and if South Vietnam subsequently collapsed, this would prove that South Vietnam had been an "unviable nation" from the beginning.

Application: *Peace* is Israel's greatest need. After four Arab-Israeli wars, it is time for the killing to stop. The October-war truce, engi-

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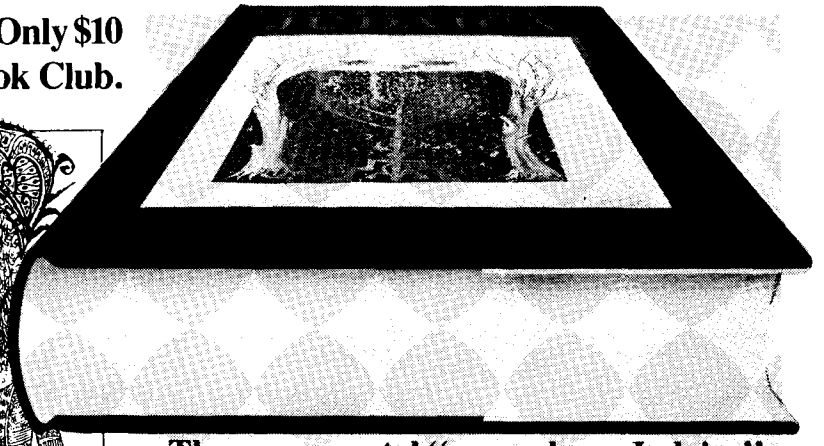

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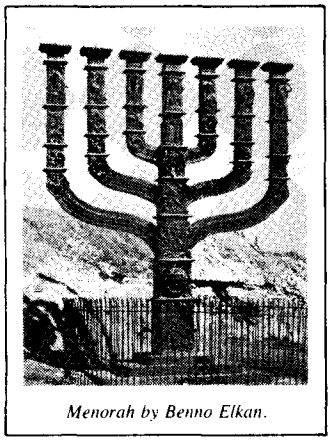

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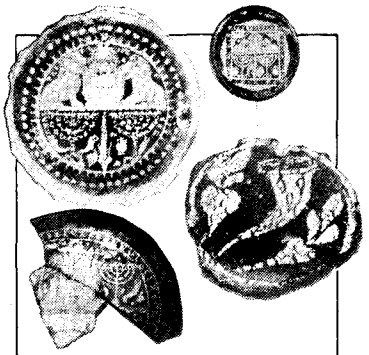

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neered by the U.S. (some compromises by Israel were necessary, of course), can lead, step-by-step (and compromise-by-compromise), to a permanent peace. The Israelis will continue to receive economic and military aid. But if war comes again, and they cannot survive on their own, this would mean that from the beginning Israel has not been a "viable nation."

The Big Lesson: The No. 1 American *moral commitment* to *all mankind* is to avoid, at all costs, the nuclear holocaust.

Our military involvement in Vietnam carried a constant risk of confrontation with Hanoi's supporters, the USSR and the People's Republic of China. Such a confrontation could lead to World War III, which would "inevitably" lead to the nuclear holocaust.

Our commitment to prevent the nuclear holocaust not only transcended the U.S. moral commitment to South Vietnamese independence, *it made that commitment immoral, and even criminal.*

Application: The U.S. moral commitment to Israeli independence is transcended by our paramount moral commitment—to avoid the nuclear holocaust. Our military intervention on Israel's side would result in a U.S.-USSR confrontation, World War III, and the nuclear holocaust. Consequently, to honor our commitment to Israeli independence by intervention would be the height of immorality.

The Israelis are 3 million people in a world of 4 billion people, 95 per cent of whom are either opposed to Israel's cause, or quite indifferent to it.

All that the Israelis now have going for them, besides their own courage and will to survive, is whatever influence a few million Jewish-American voters have on American politicians and public opinion. But now that Americans have learned—the hard way—the "lessons of Vietnam," what arguments can they use to save Israel?

There is only one: *The betrayal of our moral commitments is not the only alternative to the nuclear holocaust.* The alternative is an America militarily strong enough, and morally resolute enough, to make the risk of war (nuclear or conventional) too great for the Soviet Union.

Unfortunately, this argument will be hard to sell to the liberals, who have spent a lifetime—from Teheran and Yalta to Helsinki—insisting that all morality in American foreign policy consists in our getting into bed with Soviet Russia. Their desire to have America politically and morally raped by the Iron Curtain masters of the knout and the pogrom has to be viewed as pathological, and probably incurable.

So all one can hope, if our Israeli policy ends in the second Diaspora, is that a million or so valiant Israelis will make it safely to our shores in time to help save America.

[Hon.] CLARE BOOTHE LUCE
Honolulu, Hawaii

NORMAN PODHORETZ writes:

My argument in "The Abandonment of Israel" was that the United States has moved in the past eight years—the years, that is, of Nixon, Ford, and Kissinger—from a Middle East policy based on the "balanced whole" of Resolution 242 to a policy of one-sided pressures on Israel; I went on to argue that the new American course would lead not to peace but to disaster and even, in the final extremity, to a nuclear war (Edward S. Boylan's letter to the contrary notwithstanding); and I suggested that the United States could best contribute to a peaceful resolution of the Middle East conflict by basing its policy once again on the "position that the occupied territories were to be returned—and only to be returned—as part of a settlement which would entail recognition of Israel's existence by the Arab countries and direct negotiations among the parties to fix the precise boundaries of the now-recognized state in such a way as to insure its future security." The question now, as I understand what several of my correspondents are saying, is whether Entebbe and Lebanon have made such a change in American policy more likely than it seemed a few months ago.

My own answer to this question is a hesitant and reluctant No. Obviously, thanks to Entebbe, Israel is very popular in this country again, and just as obviously Lebanon has damaged the PLO and has done the Arabs no good in American eyes. But as against these developments, there is the fact that the United States is much more dependent on Arab oil today than we were in 1973—a fact which is likely to weigh more heavily in the making of foreign policy than the relative popularity of Israelis and Arabs.

Important as oil may be, however, there is an even more important factor to consider, and that is the degree to which the new isolationism is likely to prevail in the years ahead. If the main imperative of American policy is to be the avoidance of serious conflict with the Soviet Union, the inexorable consequence, as I tried to show, is one-sided pressures on Israel similar to those that were placed on South Vietnam in the negotiations over the Paris Accords. To that extent I agree with Clare Boothe Luce.

But I differ with Mrs. Luce on two important points. First, I would insist much more strongly than she does on the crucial distinctions between Israel and Vietnam: unlike South Vietnam, Israel is a democratic country and, moreover, it asks not for American soldiers to defend it but only for help from the United States to defend itself; and if the will and the capacity to defend oneself are the criteria of a state's "viability," then surely even Israel's bitterest enemies would have to admit that the question of viability has been settled.

Secondly, I would remind Mrs. Luce that it is the *Republicans* who have been trying to "Vietnamize" Israel, not the Democrats, and that this effort is consistent with the general Nixon-Ford-Kissinger policy of strategic withdrawal from the anti-Communist interventionism of the Kennedy-Johnson years. (I went into all this at length in my piece "Making the World Safe for Communism" in the April COMMENTARY.)

If Ford should be reelected, we have little reason to expect anything but a continuation of the foreign policies of the past eight years, including those which have been pursued in the Middle East. If Carter should win, there is a possibility of change. So far as Israel in particular is concerned, at any rate, Carter's statements, as both Benno Weiser Varon and I. L. Kenen say, have been very reassuring. On the other hand, as Congressman Koch reminds us, the new isolationism is also rampant within the congressional ranks of his own party, and Carter is surrounded by advisers in the field of foreign policy whose views are very difficult to distinguish from Henry Kissinger's,

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especially on the Middle East. Like several of my correspondents, for example, they believe that it is Israeli "intransigence," rather than the refusal of the Arabs to make their peace with a sovereign Jewish state in the Middle East, which is the major obstacle to a settlement, and that putting pressure on Israel (sometimes euphemistically known as "criticism") is accordingly in Israel's own best interests.

It is, in short, too early to tell whether Mr. Kenen's complacency is more solidly grounded than my apprehensiveness. I can only say that in this instance nothing would make me happier than to be proved wrong.

Music: Heifetz, Mozart & Joplin

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Bruce Kovner's "Heifetz the Virtuoso" [August] is a pedestrian defense of an artist who needs no defenders. The attacks of Virgil Thomson and Alan Rich hark back to the naive era when critics clamored for attention by rapping the top banana; such cheap-shot artists naturally seize on Heifetz's penchant for encore trifles, which he would have had to play even had he loathed them (one could with as little justice measure Sibelius by *Valse Triste*). Rich plays the buffoon by damning *The Heifetz Collection*, no doubt hoping to be Shakespeare's Shaw. Mr. Kovner isn't too much better when he trots out Heifetz's suppression of his accompanists (old hat) while passing over the Hollywood character of his later career: gravitating from the phony tinsel of the Rozsa Concerto to the real tinsel of Gruenberg's Concerto and Benjamin's *Romantic Fantasy*. The affected jollity of the Heifetz-Piatigorsky concerts has also cheapened his image, obscuring the fact that he illuminates the Elgar Concerto with flashes of lightning instead of the usual Edwardian gaslight. Mr. Kovner's view that Heifetz is at his "least convincing in chamber works" is gainsaid by his glorious wartime collaboration with Rubinstein, Primrose, and Feuermann—the Brahms Op. 8 Trio, Schubert's B-flat Trio, Dohnanyi's Serenade in C, the "Archduke" Trio, and Mozart's Divertimento, K. 563. This last, in particular, is interpretative collaboration at its perihelion.

DAVID WILSON
Carmel, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Bruce Kovner's splendid article . . . reminded me of a recording session I had the good fortune to attend in Boston in 1939 when Heifetz did the Brahms Concerto with the Boston Symphony and Serge Koussevitzky. Many members of the orchestra said it was the most grueling contest between two strong-minded personalities that they had ever seen. Time after time, Heifetz would quit in the middle of recording a side, maintaining that he was not happy about this, that, or the other thing. Koussevitzky, a slow boiler, was nearing the breaking point. Charles O'Connell, Victor's director, was fearing both the end result and the

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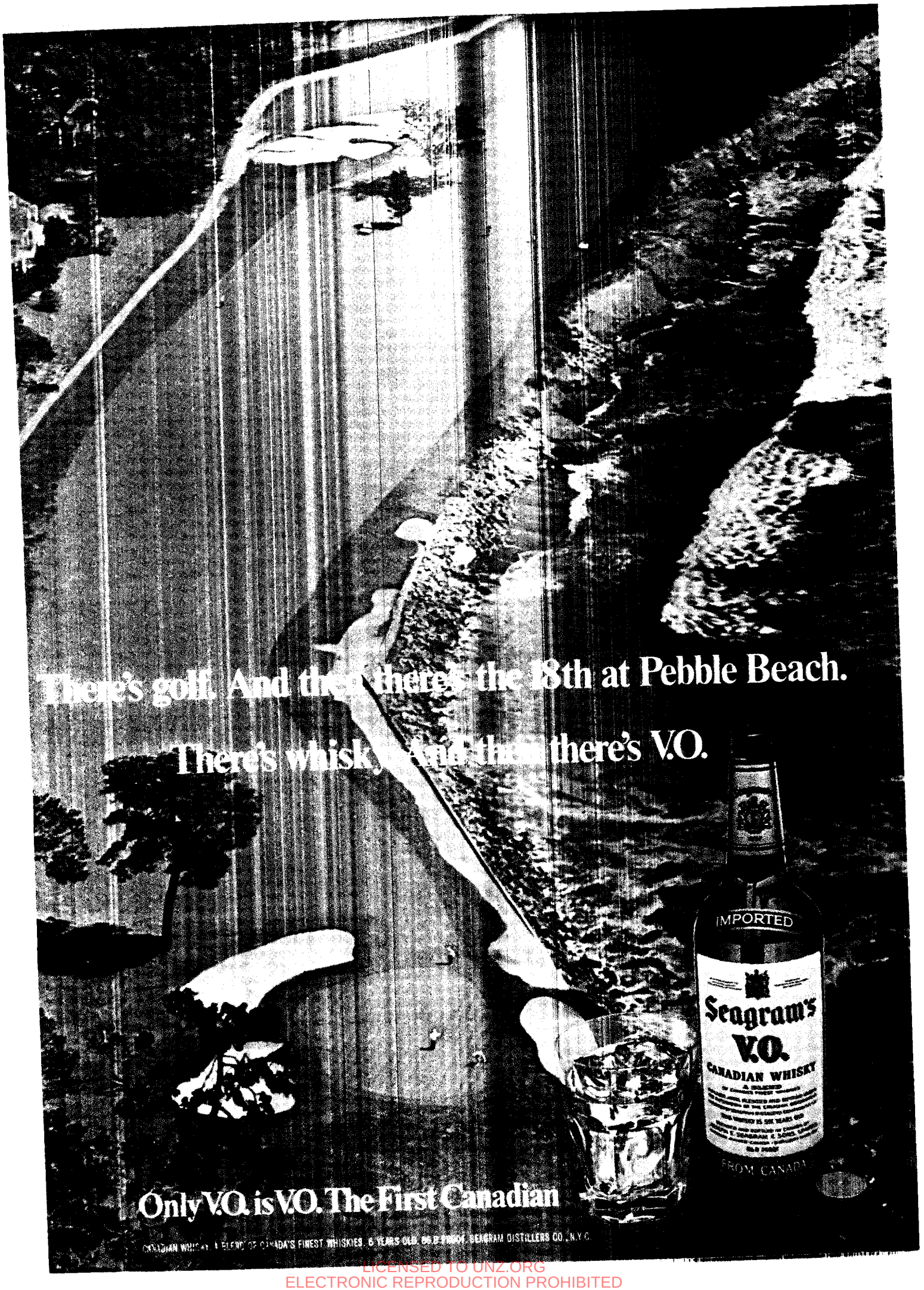

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steadily rising cost as time went on. Finally, Koussevitzky leveled a blast at Heifetz with the words "Nozzing is pairfect!" This from a man who was at the time the most notable exponent of orchestral perfection.

They went back to the beginning and finally completed the album that was issued as Victor M-581, probably the finest concerto recording Heifetz ever did. O'Connell remarked later: "For once he read the music, not the notes."

MORTON BLENDER
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . The article by Bruce Kovner left me somewhat puzzled. . . . Mr. Kovner quotes several music critics who belittle Heifetz's interpretations in some of his concert recordings. . . . Other statements of Mr. Kovner's, like calling Heifetz's musicianship "misguided," or that "Heifetz's playing more than occasionally proves disappointing, inconsistent, or just bad," are inappropriate to a performer of Heifetz's caliber.

. . . I would like to remind your readers that when George Bernard Shaw heard Heifetz for the first time, he wrote next morning in the London paper where he was the music critic: "Jascha, please make one mistake, so the gods may sleep." . . .

As a violinist of the Paris Conservatory and past member of the Paris Lamoureux Symphony, I had the honor of accompanying Heifetz in his concerts. The reverence, excitement, and adulation the orchestra musicians accorded Heifetz were not matched by those given to any other great performers.

After one of his concerts in Paris Fritz Kreisler was asked by music critic René Bizet why he did not play as well as usual that night. Kreisler replied: *"Mon cher ami,* I travel all over the world; I see statues and monuments erected to poets, virtuosi, and composers; I have yet to come across a monument erected to a critic."

. . . The aura which Heifetz created will live with us forever, and, as in his lifetime, thousands of young violinists will continue to dream of becoming a Jascha.

PIERRE MANDÉ
Miami, Florida

BRUCE KOVNER writes:

I think David Wilson chooses an easy but intellectually uninteresting explanation when he ascribes the existence of controversy over Heifetz's playing style to envy and attention-hunting. It seems implausible to me that the many critics who have, at one time or another, voiced doubts about the appropriateness or success of Heifetz's style (including not only Thomson and Rich, but B. H. Haggin, C. G. Burke, and others) are all playing the buffoon rather than expressing genuine differences of opinion. And aside from the critics, it is clear that many performing musicians and others in the musical public do not find Heifetz's playing to their taste. I think these views reflect a difference in musical values that is worth discussing. I did not try, as Mr. Wilson seems to believe, to defend Heifetz against all comers, for I was aware that my argument would please neither his admirers nor his critics. Instead, I tried to identify and describe a few elements in Heifetz's performing style which may account for the disagreements and which, perhaps, help to explain the success or failure of his interpretations.

I agree with Mr. Wilson that the Rubinstein, Primrose, Feuermann recordings are superb examples of chamber playing, and I would add to that list the Mendelssohn Trio, recorded in 1950 with Rubinstein and Piatigorsky (RCA LM-1119). But I question whether that contradicts the point that Heifetz's playing style has proved better suited to the large-scale displays of the concerto literature than to chamber music. These performances are exceptions which stand out in contrast to the many mediocre chamber recordings Heifetz has issued before and since. It appears that the exaggeration and excessive assertiveness typical of his chamber playing is absent only in recordings with artists of authority comparable to his own—particularly Feuermann and Rubinstein. (Morton Blender makes a similar point, I think, about the salutary effect of Koussevitzky's personality on Heifetz's recording of the Brahms Concerto.) If this is true, Heifetz's predilection for weak accompanists and co-players is more relevant to the discussion of his interpretative limitations than Mr. Wilson would have us believe.

* * *

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . I would like to clarify Jerome Shipman's statement [Letters from Readers, July, in a discussion of Bruce Kovner's "The Ragtime Revival," March] that I "greeted the Deutsche Grammophon recording of *Treemonisha* in terms that are usually reserved, at the very least, for *The Magic Flute.*"

I did, in fact, mention Mozart's opera, but only to point out that, like Joplin's, it has a lousy libretto. Joplin's libretto, the review said, "is not noticeably worse than what Schickaneder wrote for Mozart or Piave for Verdi." I did say that the music "is always expert and often touched with genius," and that this was a very commendable effort for a first opera.

A more clearly stated judgment of *Treemonisha*'s musical quality in comparison to other operas was given in my original review of the stage production: "When he is classical, Joplin writes on the level, approximately, of Flotow's *Martha,* which is a very fine level; when he lets some of the flavor of the spirituals or a dance rhythm into his music, he is doing something nobody else has done so well."

I'll stick by that, though it was written in the heat of the moment, for a tight deadline, ten months ago. But it's a far cry from what I would write about *The Magic Flute.*

JOSEPH MCLELLAN
Washington *Post*
Washington, D. C.

"Finlandization"

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . I find Walter Laqueur's use of the term "Finlandization" . . . both perfunctory and ill-informed [" 'Eurocommunism' & Its Friends," August]. This is not just Mr. Laqueur's problem; the term has become a favorite COMMENTARY codeword, employed by all those wishing to do battle against European Communism. What these commentators mean, if I am not misjudging them totally, is that Finland represents a dangerous political paradigm which is somehow intolerable in terms of Western concepts of democracy and freedom. The reason lies in the perceived "veto" power the Soviet Union supposedly maintains over Finnish foreign, and to a lesser extent, internal policy. This suggests, of course, that Finnish policy and practice are somehow merely a façade which the Soviets find it useful to operate behind,

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but to believe this is to fail to understand the history of modern Finland.

What many may take to be a Soviet bias in Finnish policy is hardly that. Rather, it is simply the non-interventionist, neutral position Finland has chosen to follow; an emulation, if you will, of the older Scandinavian model. Finland's neutrality as a concept and policy is deeply rooted and was in fact the source of conflict between the Finns and the Soviets which brought about the long and murderous "Continuous War." Finland's posture prevented it from making the territorial concessions to the Soviets which the latter deemed necessary for the protection of Leningrad and northwestern Russia. That the Finns—many of whom recognized a degree of legitimacy in these demands—could not agree to this was a forceful statement of Finland's desire to remain neutral in the face of "big-country" confrontation. So committed were the Finns to neutrality and territorial integrity that they went to war several times against the Soviets, and the price the Finns paid was incredible in terms of human life, property, territory, and economic destabilization. But the result was and remains an independent Finland, a true victory for democratic values. . . .

The Finns paid a price paid by few nations. . . . When all is said and done, they have persevered on their own terms, though not to Mr. Laqueur's satisfaction. . . . The Finnish people have demonstrated time and again that they are free men and women, and any nation having designs upon Finland understands that the price is unthinkably high. I suspect that the only people who would really understand the Finnish mentality would be the Israelis, who also have been forced to defend themselves and think unthinkable thoughts.

MARK B. LAPPING
Hyde Park, Vermont

WALTER LAQUEUR writes:

As Mark B. Lapping correctly surmises, he misunderstood me. There was not one word of criticism concerning Finnish policy in my article. Considering the circumstances, the Finns have shown admirable courage and steadfastness in the face of great pressure. One could think of other nations and governments which would have acquitted themselves far worse. On the other hand, I find it difficult to comment on Mr. Lapping's observations on Finland: no one even vaguely familiar with the subject would deny that the Soviet Union has a veto power on Finnish foreign and domestic policy—even on foreign trade and cultural policy. Nor can Finland be considered a neutral country in view of its treaty obligations toward the Soviet Union. Whether such a state of affairs is a "dangerous political paradigm" or not depends entirely on one's own political values. Mr. Lapping seems to find it worthy of emulation—I don't.

Interpreting the Bible

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . In "Biblical Narrative" [May], Robert Alter falls into the same traps he had so carefully cited in his previous article, "A Literary Approach to the Bible" [December 1975], where true literary scholars Northrop Frye and Erich Auerbach are cast into the same pit as "excavators" and non-Hebraicists. Not only does Mr. Alter fail to answer any of the questions he so justifiably raised in his first article, but —like the others in the "pit"—he lacks "minutely discriminating attention" and a holistic view of the Bible which fuses literary, moral, and historical subject matter while perceiving their interrelationship.

In the very first paragraph of "Biblical Narrative" Mr. Alter states that his goal in this essay is to analyze biblical repetition, "one aspect of the literary art of the Bible." But is not this "one aspect" still too vast and in great need of narrowing down? . . . Given the hodgepodge of fragments Mr. Alter takes up but never really develops, the reader is bound to become frustrated: instead of turning the reader back to the Bible itself as source—what *real* literary criticism should compel us to do—Mr. Alter's articles confuse the reader and turn him *away* from rereading the Bible. If the author wishes his "critical application of literary scholarship" to "result in a deeper appreciation of the Bible not only as a work of literature but as a religious document as well," he might first define the terms "literature" and "religious document," then explain their relationship within a *prescribed context*. For any reader who wants to enhance his appreciation of the Bible, Mr. Alter's context of "repetition" is hopelessly gargantuan.

On the other hand, some of the ideas he bandies about are inherently intriguing; had any one of them been pursued diligently, a much tighter and more interesting article might have resulted. . . .

Maybe Mr. Alter finds it impossible to see a common purpose (or, as he says, an "artful design") behind "all the contradictions" and "different sources," because *he* never connects what is "literature" in the Bible with what is "religious document"—ironically, what he had assigned himself to do at the outset. Or perhaps his confusing the various "causes" of biblical narration with its effect (and, I might add, its "affect") is responsible for the author's myopia; in fact, it may even prove central to the major conceptual flaw of this article.

Any work of art—be it a Gothic cathedral, a musical composition, a poem, or, in this case, the great "mythopoem" that is the Bible—is created in particular conditions, circumstances, and environment or milieu. What distinguishes kitsch from art—and what such literary giants as Frye and Auerbach have seriously probed and studied all their lives—is that mysterious and often paradoxical quality or force which enables the product of finite origin to transcend its "clay bonds" and become universal. With care, measure, and discipline, the critic does not have to wax sentimental and impressionistic in studying this highly evocative and affective component of art. To the contrary, as soon as the Bible scholar accepts the significance of such a component for reading "the Bible as literature," he achieves a kind of liberation: he is free to analyze why and how the fascinating metamorphosis from particular, hybrid form to universal, unified one takes place.

It is not enough for Mr. Alter to complain about the "paucity of serious literary analysis of the Bible" or about "what happens when literary scholars do not know Hebrew." Neither will the reader be sufficiently convinced or impressed by an ill-assorted peepshow of ideas on biblical narrative or by the author's knowledge of Hebrew—unless, of course, his conception of the Bible as literary art and his method of carrying it out develop both more precision and substance.

TRUDY G. ETTELSON
Chicago, Illinois

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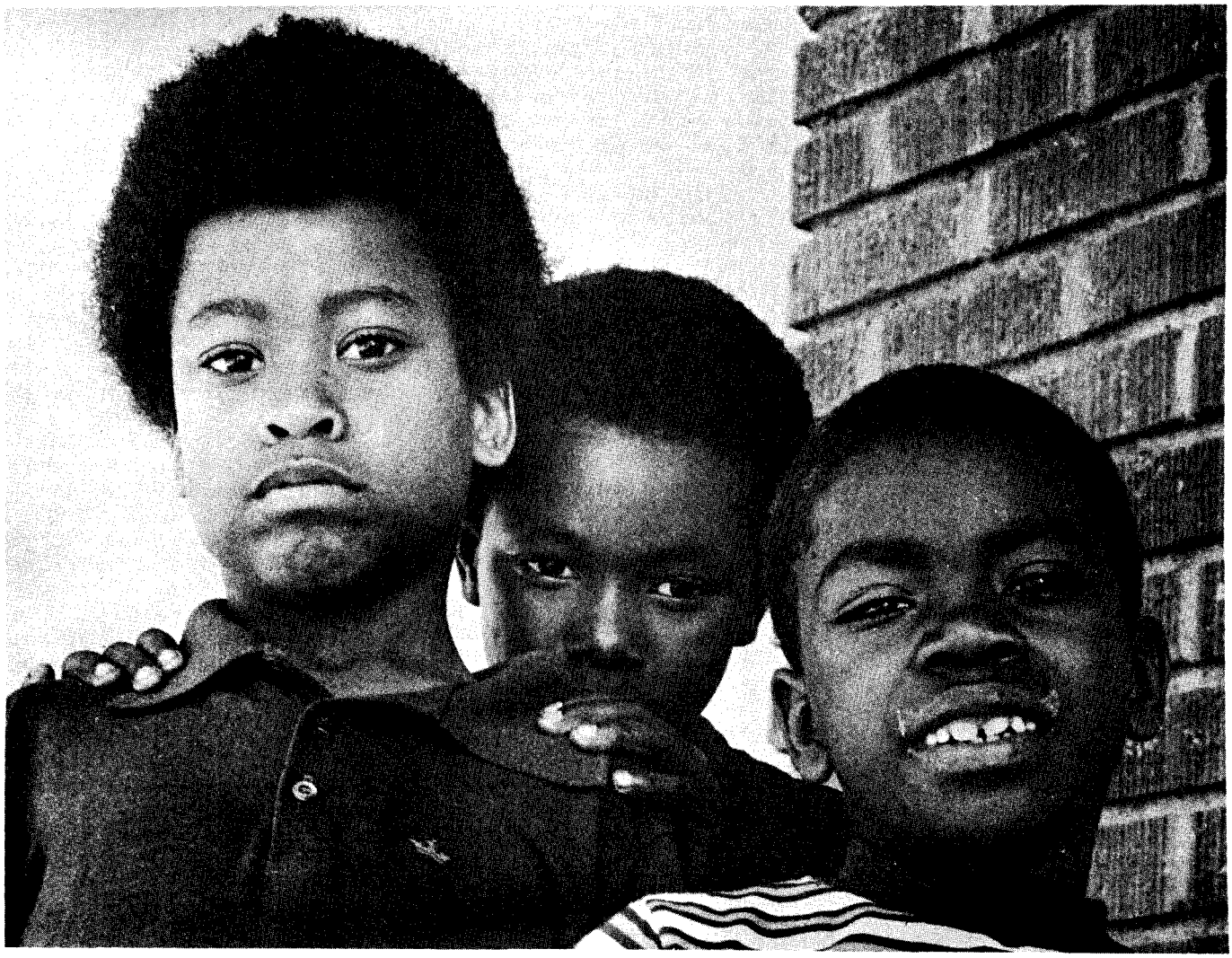

Florrie Segelman

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ROBERT ALTER writes:

Perhaps one might forgive Trudy G. Ettelson's bad manners but not the conceptual mushiness that lies behind her smoke screen of vituperation. To speak of "the great 'mythopoem' that is the Bible" and to compare it with a Gothic cathedral is self-evident nonsense because the Bible, whatever its lines of unity, is after all an anthology of highly disparate literary works written in different settings and genres for different purposes. Precisely what I argued for in the first of my articles was the need to discriminate discrete literary forms and their distinctive modes of operation within the biblical corpus. Such a commonsensical requirement, however, runs directly counter to Miss Ettelson's need to bury the Bible in meaningless mystagogic effusions about transcending clay bonds and achieving universal form. By the wavering lights of such ineffably "holistic" notions of the Bible, the straightforward critical readings I offered, for example, of two different biblical narratives, the story of Judah and Tamar and that of Balaam's prophecies, were bound to seem fragmentary and insubstantial. That, I think, is Miss Ettelson's problem, not mine.

One final comment on "literary giants." I fear that Miss Ettelson has gleaned her hazy idea of the Bible as a "mythopoem" from Northrop Frye's poetic but debatable vision of literary discourse as a great system of interlocking archetypes. Her bracketing of Frye and Auerbach, however, is rather misleading, and the assertion that I denigrated Auerbach is altogether wrong. I in fact spoke of Auerbach in my first article with the clearest admiration—*Mimesis* remains in my view one of the great critical works of our age—while suggesting only that his extraordinary insight into biblical narrative needed to be refined and qualified as it was applied to other biblical texts. But then the construction of clear statements, whether in a critical piece or in the Bible itself, would not appear to be one of Miss Ettelson's strong points.

Chile

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Mark Falcoff's "Why Allende Fell" [July], . . . is a well-written excellently substantiated, balanced, and objective exposé of Allende's failure.

I believe a parallel from Chilean history is relevant. Jorge Manuel Balmaceda was also a populist; though descended from the aristocracy, he promoted programs which, for his time, the end of the last century, were just as radical as Allende's in ours. He, too, once elected, alienated many of his followers until a civil war broke out. In 1891, before having to admit defeat, Balmaceda shot himself. François Mitterrand, leader of the French Socialists, recorded shortly after Allende's death a conversation early in his term in which Allende darkly said, "If my experiment fails I would follow Balmaceda.". . . The manner of Allende's death may be a minor fact, and one which will long be discussed, but if it was suicide the act could be said to represent his tragic admission of failure. To the many ingredients of failure described so well by Mr. Falcoff should be added important psychological traits—Allende's ambivalence toward the middle class from which he came and whose style he never abandoned, and the like. . . .

Mr. Falcoff overplays, though never so much as in other recent literature on Chile, the role of the U.S. State Department, the CIA, and ITT. . . [but] he also points out that there was no planned conspiracy to use Chile as a testing-ground against socialism. . . . In reality, the tragedy of Allende was a Chilean affair and should be judged as such, despite the enormous worldwide interest in this first experiment of an . . . elected Marxist regime. Mr. Falcoff rightly attempts to set the events in their proper perspective, [though] he seems to suggest that more attention should be paid to the role of the USSR and other socialist countries, including the half-billion dollars spent by them on Allende, a part of the story which has been ignored by most American observers.

I should also mention the seven years I spent in Chile and the many revolutions which I witnessed, from the collapse of the first Ibanez regime to the last election of Arturo Alessandri in 1932, none of which ended with the sort of brutal retribution, illegal arrests, refusal of habeas corpus, concentration camps, "investigations," disappearances, and endlessly delayed process of justice which have characterized the current regime. All this is a first in Chilean history, without precedent, and it is the

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cause of the international indignation that the Junta finds so difficult to understand. Those of us who know and love Chile should, as an act of conscience and compassion, do as much as possible, through organizations and pressure on Washington, to help the victims of oppression.

In a lighter vein and in conclusion, let me contradict Mr. Falcoff's judgment of Chile as "a not very interesting place" and inferior to other Latin American countries, all of which I also know and love. But the fact is that Chile . . . has music equally as fine as Brazil's; a climate of eight rainless months which is not inferior to Mexico's; and many tourist attractions. . . . Mr. Falcoff's appraisal of the Chilean people is odd; in reality, they are remarkably homogeneous, intellectually sensitive and alert, and their sense of humor, even of the sarcastic and quixotic variety, is superb. Mr. Falcoff, give them another chance.

GERARD E. NEISSER
New York City

MARK FALCOFF WRITES:

I thank Gerard E. Neisser for his interesting and valuable comments. I quite agree that our possible distaste for any given Chilean government (or governments) should not make us insensitive to the sufferings of the Chilean people. The two are not coterminious. We should, as he suggests, "do as much as possible . . . to help the victims of oppression." Unfortunately, many of those who now urge this course upon us (I except Mr. Neisser) were the ones who worshipped most dutifully at the shrine of non-intervention when Allende was in power.

Teaching Writing

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Apparently Joseph Epstein ["Professing English," August] would solve the problem of college students' inept writing by turning composition courses into literary-studies courses emphasizing our heritage of "experience, ideas, and the creative strength of language." Standards of writing are to be invoked from classic texts. Their usage, prose rhythms, and principles of argument are to be studied to give students "an opening into all the possibilities of human expression that the last twenty years in English studies have done so much to destroy."

If Mr. Epstein had examined as many freshman-composition anthologies as I have in the last ten years, he would surely see that his proposed method for teaching writing—in essence, the study and imitation of time-tested models—has been extensively practiced. It still has many proponents among composition teachers all over the country. I gather that Mr. Epstein's proposed literary studies, however, would go beyond mere slavish imitation of models to become a soaking up of the expressive modes and techniques of great writers, so that after this osmotic process the student would have internalized a rich fund of words, phrases, allusions, syntactic gambits, and rhetorical strategies to draw from in new creative ways. Certainly such a process occurs with many writers, and has value. Mr. Epstein himself is perhaps a notable example.

But literary study, even if explicitly directed to rhetorical techniques, cannot be substituted for the guided learning and practice of the separate art and discipline of rhetoric. Composing something in writing is an individual creative process that cannot be fully recreated or learned from the study of someone else's finished work. It must be learned by slow, intensive, directed practice of an ordered series of steps: invention of one's own material, invention of an audience, development of a thesis, division and arrangement of parts, and stylistic experiment and revision. If students are taken thoroughly through these steps . . . in composition courses, they are going to have to do most of their literary study in literature and humanities courses. I am heartily in favor of their having as many of these as possible, and do not doubt that from them students may absorb rhetorical reinforcement. But literary studies alone cannot, and obviously have not, done the job.

Mr. Epstein is right in pointing to the tendency in most universities and colleges to relegate composition teaching to "grub work" for "underlings." But these "underlings" are candidates for Ph.D.'s in literature and should therefore have some expertise in the literary-study approach that Mr. Epstein recommends. The problem is actually that most of them know no other approach and thus use that one, with generally unsatisfactory results. . . .

Fortunately, the trend is beginning to be reversed. Publications and conferences of the National Council of Teachers of English have been highlighting rhetorical theory and research for the last ten years or so. A few universities have developed rhetoric programs for English majors—Northern Illinois University, Wayne State, and the University of Virginia, for example. The University of Southern California has a complete independent doctoral program in rhetoric, including courses from related disciplines such as speech, linguistics, and psychology as well as a solid foundation in literary studies. . . .

Expanding this revitalized discipline of rhetoric and requiring it as a background for composition teachers is a fundamental step toward producing better writers. The 19th-century teachers referred to by Mr. Epstein who applied rhetoric to the study of composition were on the right track. Our 20th-century preoccupation with peripheral matters such as grammatical correctness and free expression shunted us off the track. We are now getting back with a new, growing body of rhetorical theory and research to help us guide students into successful written composing. . . .

BETTY CAIN
Department of English
Kennedy-King College
Chicago, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I believe Joseph Epstein when he says that the teaching of college English is corrupt, not because it is at the service of the "elite in America," but precisely because English departments do *not* take an elitist view. Mr. Epstein implies that . . . literary culture is being systematically destroyed, . . . but he does not adequately treat the causes of this . . .

University budgets, in real dollars, are either shrinking or barely being maintained; the student population is not growing much; very little hiring is taking place. Therefore administrators are looking very closely at faculty "productivity." One measure of such productivity is "contact hours" with students. This leads to competition among various university departments for enrollment, and hence to an increase in "relevant" and entertaining courses. It is a matter of economic necessity: if departments do not bring in students, by hook or by crook, not only will no new

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people be hired, but some will be fired. The increasing proportion of tenured faculty in universities is another factor in the plight of the universities. Aside from bringing about under- and unemployment for many, it also means stagnation. . . .

Freshman composition courses, one would think, should be the salvation of English departments. The old boys may shun it, but there are probably plenty of young Ph.D.'s looking for jobs who would gladly do it. But, as Mr. Epstein notes, required freshman composition, along with course requirements in general, is being abandoned. And when it cannot be abandoned, it is taught by graduate students at universities with Ph.D. programs, and by adjunct faculty at others. They are cheaper. And of course, young Ph.D.'s do not get hired, while departments hasten their own corruption by accepting students they suspect of being unqualified, simply because they need them to teach introductory courses.

Thus, Richard Ohmann, whose book Mr. Epstein discusses, is inadvertently correct in noting that the educational system is responsive to the needs of the economic system. If it were not, then more students might learn to read and write.

RITA B. MESSING
Irvine, California

Litvak vs. Galitzianer

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In these sad times of communal strife in Europe, the Middle East, and even Canada, I suppose it was inevitable that some irresponsible person should revive the ancient feud between the Litvak and the Galitzianer. Make no mistake about it: Chaim Raphael's piece, "The Litvak Connection and Hasidic Chic" [May], may well have been but an opening salvo. Though masquerading as a celebration of imaginary Litvak virtues, it is in fact a massive onslaught on everything that we, Hasidim and Galitzianer, hold dear. Centuries of melancholy experience have taught us that it is futile to argue with a Litvak, because the Litvak is driven not by his allegedly Cartesian mind, but by burning envy. To put it bluntly: we, Galitzianer and Hasidim, have *soul*; they don't.

There was a time, I concede, when some of us simplistically lumped together all Litvaks on the principle that once a Litvak, always a Litvak. We now know that one is not *born* a Litvak, but rather, as a result of deficient upbringing, stoops to that condition. Mr. Raphael's "logic" is a case in point: to him, Chaim Weizmann, who, by his own admission, never set foot in a Litvak yeshivah, is said to have embodied for some reason its quintessential values.

That Professor Ben-Sasson is really a Litvak is, conversely, more than obvious, though not for the reason deduced by Mr. Raphael. Church Fathers the Professor quotes, and in Latin yet. There was a time when any Galitzianer (let alone a Hasid) would tell you that the attraction to medieval Catholic scholasticism is indeed a prime attribute of the Litvak *tsaylemkop* [casuist].

Myself a descendant of Hasidim of Belz and a proud Galitzianer, I gird my loins with a *gartl* [belt] and stand ready to defend the honor of my heritage. As they used to say in my Hasidic *shtibl* [prayer-house] on Rue des Rosiers: *Ils ne passeront pas.*

MAURICE FRIEDBERG
University of Illinois
Urbana, Illinois

CHAIM RAPHAEL writes:

Happy the Litvak who rouses the Galitzianer from his lair. Doubly so in rousing Maurice Friedberg, who, with his lively wit, demonstrates the point I tried to establish in my article: that there is nothing necessarily or permanently disabling in having been *born* a Hasid. One can emerge from it, as Bialik and Berdichevski did, trailing clouds of Hasidic soul, but open to the wider influences of intellect, reality, and irony which have made the Litvak tradition the abiding force in Jewish life.

It is precisely because Chaim Weizmann embodied the quintessential Litvak qualities without having set foot in a Litvak yeshivah that I took him as a symbol. The heritage forged at Volozhyn lives on among all Jews whose minds are open equally to the ideas and stimuli of the world around them and the deepening of their consciousness as Jews. The common quality is to be open-minded. As one looks back through history one sees the Litvak as both serious and perplexed. He is fully aware that there are no final answers, but this will never distract him from the search.

Sir Isaiah Berlin, in a notable study, said of Weizmann: "Obsessed and lopsided natures repelled him: he was contemptuous of addiction to doctrine and theory without constant concrete contact with empirical reality." Aharon Katzir, the scientist-brother of the current President of Israel, depicted Weizmann as a "whole man," whose scientific approach was an "operational philosophy" of life. Men like Weizmann, he wrote, "forgo the pleasures of children's dreams and are ready to grapple with reality directly. [He had] an open-minded approach, always capable of change in the light of current critical experience." One longs for Litvaks like this (wherever they were born) in the seats of power today.

Not that Litvaks are comfortable people to have around. They want to get things done, and are painfully aware that nothing much will happen until everybody gets cracking in the Litvak manner. "Please get up a little *Litwische Stimmung*," Weizmann wrote to Harry Sacher, one of his supporters, during the pre-Balfour Declaration struggle. Sacher, in a commemorative essay, said of Weizmann's famous wit: "It was not without a tinge of acid. He could, on the appropriate occasion, convert a pretension to ridicule by a biting phrase or epithet."

In these terms, it seems that there might be room among us for Mr. Friedberg. He handles epithets nicely: and one Galitzianer who repents is worth more (in the rabbinic view) than an innocent Litvak who has never been tempted to wear a *gartl*. As if to prove how wide open the gates are, one need only recall that the man closest to Weizmann's heart was Shmarya Levin, whose father was a Litvak but whose mother was a Hasid.

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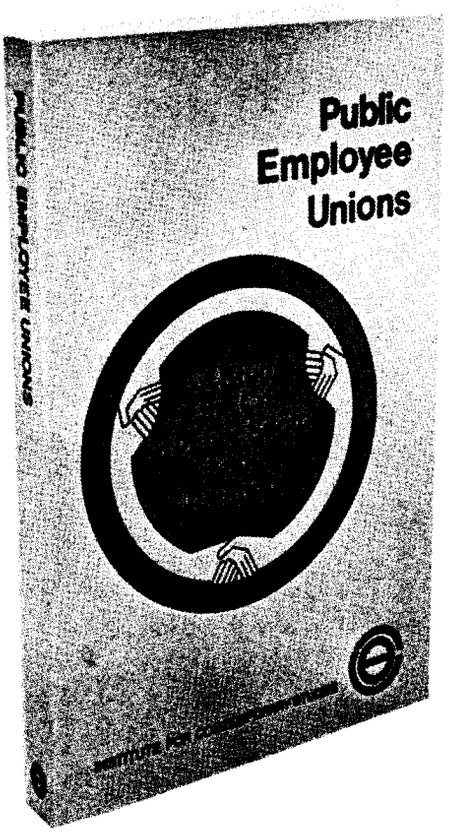

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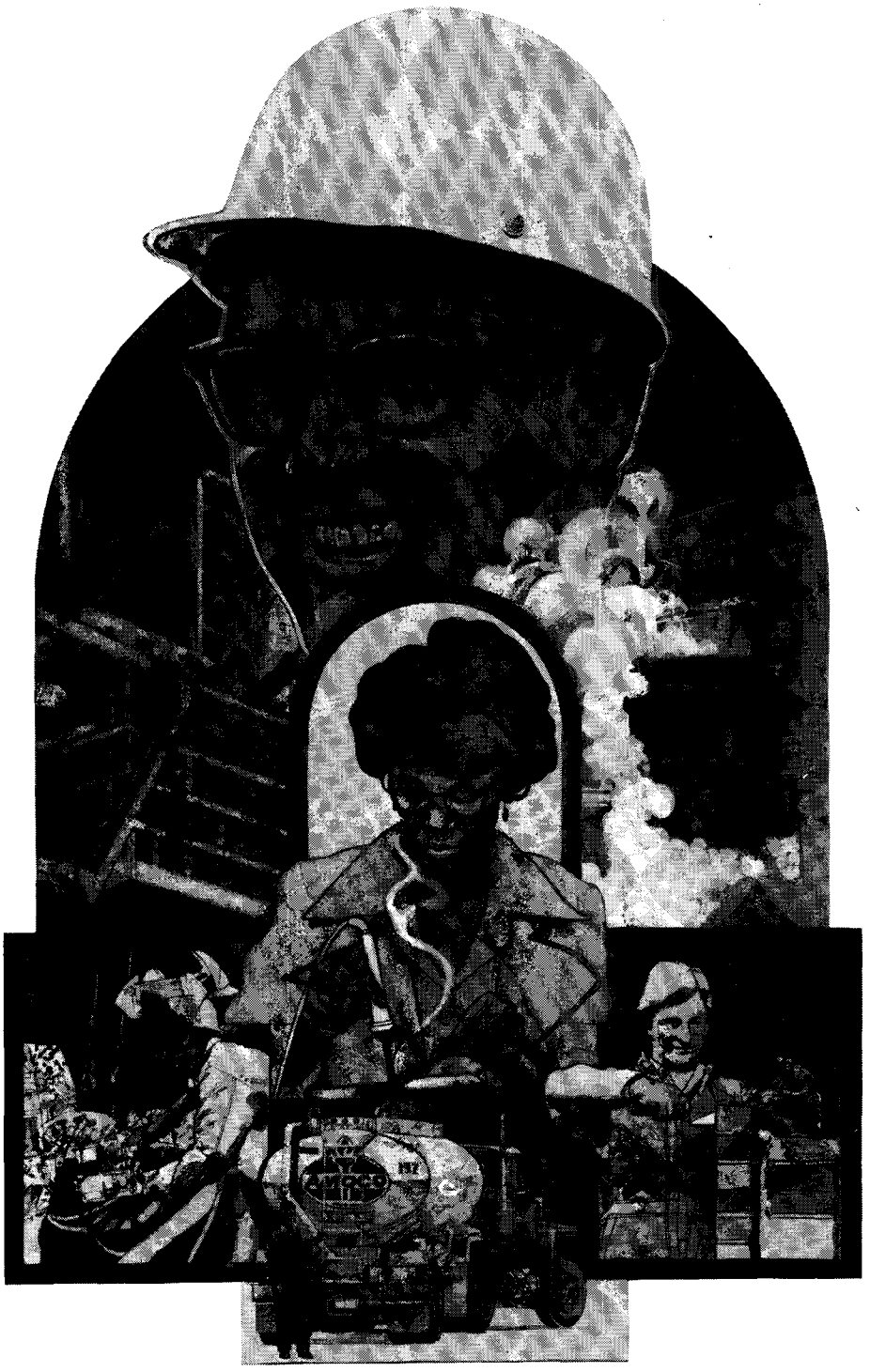

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Performing Abortions

Magda Denes

STEPPING OFF the elevator on the seventh floor of the abortion hospital, I find myself in the saline unit where I am to start my research on how people involved in the performing of legal abortions feel about the work they do. Altogether there are eighteen patients here, full house for the floor. Three are fifteen years old; one, sixteen; seven, seventeen; two, eighteen; one, twenty-one; one, twenty-five; two, twenty-seven; and one, thirty-two. Their periods of gestation range from sixteen to twenty-three weeks. The one twenty-three weeks pregnant is fifteen years old.

Straight ahead of me, about six feet away, I see the television room. The regular door is open, but the slatted, swinging half-doors, common to old hospital rooms and Western saloon entrances, are closed. Below the doors I can see a pair of bare legs in pink furlike booties; another pair of bare legs in green wedgies; and farthest from the door, the bottom part of a wine-colored paisley robe. As I come closer the legs disappear from view and I can hear the television going. The seventh floor is the only one that has a television room. They need it here, because it is in this room that the girls wait, together, to be ushered by the nurse, one by one, into the treatment room for induction.

I knock and enter without waiting for an answer. Four faces look up at me. I had missed a pair of propped-up legs. "Hi," I say. "I am Doctor Denes, I am here to. . . ." I am stuck. The wind has been knocked out of me. Abortions in my mind happen to grownups who are unwillingly pregnant but don't look it. These are little girls far gone with child.

I gradually shift my eyes to the girl sitting nearest to me. She is the one with pink fur-like booties. She must be one of the fifteen-year-olds, although she appears much younger. She sits totally absorbed in the show, the title of which is "Hospital." Her lips are slightly parted, and in the left corner of her mouth there is a small bubble of saliva. Her hands, folded, rest on her large belly, in the age-old posture of pregnant women. From close up, her legs are thin, vulnerable, little-girl legs, covered with long blond transparent hair.

THE following day I am invited to watch one of the doctors work. He is Dr. Szenes—like me, by an odd coincidence, an emigré from Hungary. The patient, a girl of about sixteen, half-dead with fear, is helped by a nurse onto a treatment table. The nurse makes her lie down. She lifts the girl's white hospital gown to her waist and covers her thighs and genitals with a sterile disposable towelette, leaving her round protruding belly exposed. With a small gauze pad she washes the area with alcohol. Meanwhile, Dr. Szenes scrubs his hands at a tiny sink in the corner opposite to mine. "What is your name, young lady?" he asks. "Flo. Florence Sullivan." "Sullivan. Irish, eh? And how old are you?" "Well, my father was Irish. Sixteen and a half." "That's pretty young, to be going through this. When was your last period?" "June or July." "Which?" "June, I guess." "That makes you twenty-two weeks pregnant. Right?" "That's what I was told." The conversation goes on, partly to gather information, partly I suppose to reassure the obviously terrified girl.

When he is through scrubbing, Szenes stands in front of the nurse, who holds open first a left, then a right sterile rubber glove so that the doctor can slip his hands into them. "Now this whole thing should not hurt you," he says, again addressing the girl. "It will be uncomfortable, but it should not hurt." The nurse hands Dr. Szenes a syringe. He expels a little liquid into the air, then injects Flo, near her belly button, just under the skin, holding the syringe parallel to the girl's abdomen. About two seconds later without removing the needle he jerks the syringe upward to make the needle plunge straight down into the abdominal cavity. At this point the needle is invisible and the syringe is completely vertical in the doctor's hands. The injected liquid is 5 cc's of Novocain. Flo winces and her eyes well up, but she remains silent. Szenes smiles at her. "That was the worst part, the rest is apple pie."

The nurse sprays the area with iodine solution, tinting Flo's skin the color of brown mustard. She

MAGDA DENES, a psychoanalyst who practices in New York City, is professor, training analyst, and supervisor both at the Institute of Advanced Psychological Studies at Adelphi University and in the post-doctoral program in psychoanalysis and psychotherapy at New York University. A different version of the present article will serve as a chapter in Dr. Denes's book, *In Necessity and Sorrow: Life and Death in an Abortion Hospital,* which is to be published soon by Basic Books.

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takes the syringe from the doctor and hands him a needle. It looks enormous. He holds it up to show me. "It is an eighteen-gauge, three-and-a-half-inch-long spinal needle. We use this to tap the fetal sac. It works very well." Turning back to the patient he places the needle on the exact spot of the injection and pushes it in to the hilt in one firm fluid motion resembling the choreographed movement of a dancer. Szenes's first-rate professional competence is unmistakable. There is no reaction from Florence. The needle ends in a pink hub about half an inch long. Holding on to it, Szenes removes the stylet to permit the free flow of amniotic fluid. As he lifts the stylet, I see a little squirt of yellowish liquid shoot up through the pink hub. Szenes says: "That's good. We're doing very well." The nurse hands him a short thin rubber tube, one end of which he attaches to the needle hub. To the other end of the tube he connects a large syringe. Holding it steady, he slowly pulls the plunger outward, filling the syringe with a thin liquid the color and consistency of urine. He is suctioning out the amniotic fluid. When the syringe is filled, he disconnects it from the rubber tube and squirts the liquid into the corner sink. The process is repeated three times—amounting altogether to one hundred and fifty cc's of amniotic fluid removed from Flo's belly.

"How do you feel, young lady?" "Fine." Flo's voice is barely audible. Her hands are clutched on her chest, and she is very pale. "Excellent, because we are almost finished. I am going to hook you up now to the saline to replace the fluid we took out. While that's going on, you'll have to tell me whether you feel anything unusual. Like if your face gets flushed or if you suddenly feel numb or very thirsty. Things like that, okay?" Flo nods. "Talking doesn't interfere with this process, you know." The intent is to console, the result is disaster. Flo breaks into racking sobs. Her belly heaves up and down causing the rubber tube to flop about. "Stop it at once, you will dislodge the needle." The nurse, who until now has not uttered a sound, puts her hand on Flo's forehead and says, "Come on, dear, it is almost over." Flo grabs a corner of her folded-up white gown, stuffs it into her mouth and bites down on it. She looks like a broken-hearted three-year-old.

Next to the treatment table there is an intravenous stand about ten feet tall with an inverted bottle hanging from each side of its crossbar. One of the bottles has a long rubber tube attached to it. Szenes removes the short tubing from the hub of the needle in Flo's belly and connects it to the long tube leading from the bottle. The bottle contains hypertonic solution. He checks to see that the flow is steady by lowering and raising the bottle a couple of times, before replacing it on the stand. "I want about two thousand," he says to the nurse. It is evidently her duty now to keep an eye on the amount and the evenness of the flow.

The words of a pamphlet I had picked up weeks ago come back: "As a result of the concentrated solution of saline in the uterus the fetus will not survive more than a few hours after the injection."

Szenes sits down at a small desk in my corner to make notes in the charts. "Look here," he says to me, pointing to a number that exceeds nine thousand. "What is it?" "The patient's number." "You mean you have done this many?" "Well, not I, the five of us. Four, really, because Dr. Marcus joined us only a couple of hundred ago. I'd say it's about two thousand apiece, give or take a few."

"Okay," says Dr. Szenes, getting up and checking the bottle. "I think we can remove this now." He disconnects the bottle, retracts the needle, and the nurse puts an adhesive strip on the tiny puncture site. "Do you feel all right?" Flo nods. "You can go back to your room now. Lie down for a half-hour. Then drink two glasses of water. After that, you can walk around. Watch TV. Make phone calls, whatever you want to do. When dinner comes you must eat it all whether you like it or not. All of it. After dinner you are to stay in bed. The house doctor will come to your room and put an intravenous needle in your arm. Once that's done you may not move at all, nor eat or drink anything. The IV contains glucose to nourish you and a medicine called Pitocin to stimulate labor. If the cramps get bad you can ask the nurse for some Demerol, a pain killer. You must ask for it if you want it, because the nurses can't tell when your pains get really bad. Don't believe anyone who says it retards labor. It does nothing of the sort. With any luck, you should be all done twenty-four hours after the IV is inserted."

The process, in other words, though he does not say this to Flo, is exactly like giving birth to a child: cramps, water-break, fetus, placenta, end. Except, of course, that in this case the fetus is already dead.

THE SALINE floor is a difficult place for lasting clarity and durable convictions. One day I speak with Debbie, twelve years old, six months pregnant by her uncle, who through the convoluted miseries of Debbie's short life, also happens to have been her stepfather for the past ten years. "He has been messing with me for two years, but I only got my first period eight months ago," she reports, her brown eyes full of tears behind gold-rimmed glasses. "What hurts, Debbie?" "I don't want him to be in jail, where they put him. I love my uncle. He was like a father to me. We played games." By now she is sobbing, bitterly mourning a vanished parent as any child will. "But Debbie, what he did with you, what about that?"

"It was wrong, but I miss my uncle," she says, her shoulders shaking with grief.

Thanks to Debbie, the seventh floor experiences a spirit of solidarity bordering on joy. The belief that the work done here is truly in the service of humankind is manifest again in the swollen-bellied body of this little girl, whom everyone in concerted effort wants to spare and to comfort.

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The attendants give her candy. Her doctor, in departure from the usual procedure, orders no IV so as to avoid confining her to bed while she waits to deliver. The nurses call her "little Debbie" and keep asking her how she feels.

There is a live child on this floor whose future people are hard at work to save.

Quantity, however, has a way of radically altering quality. When, under one roof, the number of dead fetuses mounts into the thousands, the simple fact of death gradually overshadows the significance of individual histories. It seems that none who work here can witness the extinction of a segment of the future generation without guilt and fear. In my interviews with them, the word "murder" surfaces again and again, and it sticks on the tongue like a searing coal of fire that one knows will do further damage whether it is swallowed or spat out.

Charles Bender, M.D., Age 37

"My feelings about doing abortions were very significant and it was a long period of time for me to work it out. I dare say any thinking sensitive individual can't not realize that he is ending life or potential life, you know. I certainly don't enjoy that. I have no conscious conflict over killing a fetus. There's certainly nothing enjoyable in the act, except providing a necessary something to a person to make their life or burden happier, or easier, or whatever. But there's got to be more to it. I don't enjoy, that's a bad word, I don't relish delivering the fetus. Now I think the nurses have a harder job than we have. They are the ones who see the fetus. I don't see a fetus—maybe once a week, one—so that there's a separation of the final product and what I do. When it comes out, I don't want to cry, and I don't feel great remorse over this lack of life. It's not pleasant to me by any means. But I don't know if it is to anybody. . . .

"I've had the question of extramarital sex come up in my practice and I've spoken to girls, I mean women, about it, and I don't feel that any girl goes into Maxwell's Plum just because she wants to have sexual relations. She's going in there because she's seeking a relationship. We are not that liberated. The relationship is being sought, I feel, sadly, through a sexual contact. I think this has to reduce one's self-respect. It takes, I feel, a significant and meaningful aspect of one's life out of context. I think we're certainly living in a time of decreased human respect, of decreased human relationships, and of decreased sensitivity to killing off things.

"If you lose that importance or significance in sex, you just in another way erode another means of humanistic response and we've lost enough."

John Szenes, M.D., Age 36

"I think that every woman should be given the right to determine whether she wants to be pregnant or not. And if she doesn't want to be, and it's not two days before term, but is a reasonable time before the fetus becomes viable, she should be able to go to any gynecologist, whom she would go to for a Pap smear, or for a discharge, or whatever, and that gynecologist should *not* sit back and say, 'Now let's see what are your reasons for having this abortion.' I don't think that should be *our* decision.

"With somebody who wants to have a child, you should do your utmost to help bring that direction. And with the one who doesn't want it, you should do your utmost to help her out of that situation.

"You have to become a bit schizophrenic. In one room you encourage the patient that the slight irregularity of the fetal heart is not important, everything is going well, she is going to have a nice baby, and then you shut the door and go into the next room and assure another patient on whom you just did a saline abortion, that it's fine if the heart is already irregular, she has nothing to worry about, she is *not* going to have a live baby. I mean you definitely have to make a 180-degree turn, but somehow it evolved in my own mind gradually, and I have no trouble now making the switch. . . .

"At the beginning we were doing abortions on fetuses that were not quite as large. And the kicking and the fetal heartbeat did not manifest itself quite as obviously as it does now, in the larger cases. So I can imagine, if I had started doing twenty-four-weekers right off the bat, I would have had much greater conflict in my own mind whether this is tantamount to murder. But since we started gradually, with fifteen-, sixteen-weekers, where the overwhelming interest of the mother was so obvious, the fetus just never got consideration. It just did not enter the picture. Then, as one gained experience, the whole range of cases that we had to take care of started to become larger. All of a sudden one noticed that at the time of the saline infusion there was a lot of activity in the uterus. That's not fluid currents. That's obviously the fetus being distressed by swallowing the concentrated salt solution and kicking violently and that's, to all intents and purposes, the death trauma. You can either face the method or you can turn the other way and claim it's uterine contractions. That, however, would be essentially repressing, since as a doctor you obviously understand that it is not. Now, whether you admit this to the patient, that's a different matter.

"The whole technique of saline abortions has come in so gradually, that there was no outstanding dramatic event which would have signaled, 'Now, here is an issue that I have to face whether I do it, or I don't.' It never happened like that. The patient's distress by unwanted pregnancy is to me the primary consideration and I am willing to put that ahead of the possible considerations for the fetus. We'll just have to face it, that somebody has to do it. And, unfortunately, we are the executioners in this instance.

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"In my view it would be unfair to say, 'Well, I enjoy taking out fibroids but I just abhor doing abortions.' That's not fair. Whether this is a rationalization on my part or not, I'm not sure. But I think I have no conflict in my own mind of representing the patient's interests all the way. . . .

"Now I think a decision of this sort is very well within the individual's rights. Same way as somebody who wants to die. I don't believe in medical stunts in keeping people alive when they're hopeless. I am not prepared to defend euthanasia outright, because it has too many pitfalls, but I think that there are certain situations when at least the physician shouldn't stand on his head to save somebody with terminal cancer, for example. Even though it's unpleasant to turn off that last switch, by having gotten to the point where your authority may include that, you have to do it. There has to be a person where the buck stops. This joint responsibility is a lot of nonsense. I mean you didn't become the leading member of a health team by virtue of training and what-not if you cannot assume responsibility. And being an obstetrician *does* propose just this sort of decision. Since you have the tools, you have the training of doing it right, and the woman has no other person to turn to. Aren't you withholding something that she's entitled to by refusing her? And I think somebody before going into obstetrics and gynecology should decide in his own mind is he capable of doing that. And if he's not, then, I mean if the heat is too much in the kitchen, get the hell out."

Mrs. X., M.D., Age 39

"When I was in training, and when we used to do some therapeutic abortions for German measles and some psychiatric reasons, I never used to like it. When I started reading more about legal abortion, and women's privilege, and all, I think I agree with it, that up to a certain stage like twelve or fourteen weeks it's nothing. The woman has a right to decide. I don't know my opinion as far as after eighteen or up to twenty-four weeks, I still don't know.

"When you are delivering a twenty-four-weeks fetus, which looks almost like a little baby, or when you hear the fetal heart tone, I don't have any feeling of it like murderer, or like other people tell, that it is murder. Those feelings I don't have. But somehow or other, I just feel that a woman at this stage is always involved with the baby. You know it has already been kicking for some weeks. And how can she dare give this thing up. Because it's part of you. What we don't realize is that these very women go home and in a quiet moment they must be thinking about it.

"I feel sad, I don't have a guilt feeling like murder, and I hear men talking, 'Abortion is murder.' I still give it, it's a woman who is going to be mother, she is the one who decides. This is my primary feeling. I'm not a Catholic, and I'm not an anti-abortionist who has a strong opinion about it as a murder. I come from an overpopulated country in Asia, and I see the great need of controlling the population. I see the load of feeding kids and also the problems of it, so I do believe that if they want it, it's better off this way, than leaving them on the street, to the peddlers and the pushers. So I'm very scientific and very practical. It's only inner sadness comes when I think of a baby of twenty weeks or twenty-four weeks when I see it. So I just think that this very baby, if it can move me so much has to be moving the person who has carried it so long. . . ."

Dora Greenwald, M.S.W., Age 28

"At first I was very upset by the deliveries. I'm not one to see blood and mess and things like that. But I have since gotten so excited about it that I've thought about going back to nursing school. When you think about it on a certain level, it's a really interesting thing that is happening. It's fascinating, when you can think about it clinically and not get involved in the people, or the babies. What happened when I was first working here was that I just thought about the baby and that was very upsetting. I'm very pro-abortion. I think that if women want it, and need it, they should definitely have the opportunity to get it. So I had to try to make myself keep thinking of that and the fact that these people need it. And when you hear their stories and get involved in them as people, it's much easier to take.

"I think I must have overcompensated, you know, overreacted and tried to look, and like really get into it, And several times I saw really beautiful things happen, I mean it's physically beautiful. . . .

"Sometimes you can see the vagina opening up and the entire thing coming out at once. Most of the times the water will break, and then the fetus will come out and then the afterbirth. You know, in sequence. But sometimes this all comes out at once, like a balloon with the fetus inside and the afterbirth just sitting on top. It's a really interesting thing, and it got me very excited.

"Also, the fact that these patients are so grateful for whatever comfort and support you give them. It's the first time that I've been in any kind of social work where people say, 'Thank you.' You know most of the time in therapy they are working along with you, or whatever, but there's not the same response. Here they don't expect to have the comfort and the support, and they are so grateful when they get it. They feel so helpless. . . .

"A lot of people say they're killing their baby. You get a lot of that. Some people afterwards get very upset and say, 'I killed my baby.' They wouldn't rather have the baby and give it up for adoption, either. If you go into that with them they will say that they could never do that because if they carry it to term they'd want to keep it. And yet they still consider it killing the baby.

"Well, they *are* killing a baby. I mean, they are killing something that would develop into maturity, but under the circumstances that's necessary,

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and probably better for the baby. You have to realize that these children would be unwanted and a lot of times uncared for, so it's much better that they are not brought into the world. . . ."

Susan Lindstrom, M.S.W., Age 27

"I am having a lot of difficulty with my feelings about late abortions. All the pain that seems to be there so much of the time after the baby is moving and everything. And I saw this movie of a live birth recently and it just was so terrifically painful to me, to see and feel the difference between what a live birth is and what a saline abortion is. You could just feel all the joy and excitement of seeing this live baby come out. A whole different color, like white and light and alive and moving, crying, and doing all these things, and you know, having seen a considerable number of fetuses being all dark and red and blue and dead.

"I'll never forget the first fetus because it was the very first week I was here. This little bitty girl from, I think, Wisconsin, a black girl, very, very scared. And she was just in incredible pain, and screaming and calling to God and all kinds of things and I was holding on to her and Dr. Szenes came in and broke her water and helped her deliver right there, and it splattered all over the whole room. . . .

"And then to see, to be with somebody while they're having the injection when they're twenty-three, twenty-four weeks, and you see the baby, moving around, kicking around, as this needle is going down into the stomach, you know. And then one of the doctors said something he never should have said to this one girl that I'm talking about because she had just a lot of feelings about it—'It's a baby,' 'It's a person,' 'I'm killing it' kind of feelings which she had talked to me about. And at the induction he was having trouble, because the baby was moving around and blocking up the needle, and so he gets angry and he just makes the comment that the baby was putting his finger up against the needle. You know, just personalized it. . . .

"There's such conflict because there's so much pain in the mothers. Mixed emotional pains, conflict of what to do. And being concerned about killing something. They don't want to kill something. . . ."

Two doors down from the nurses' station there is a little room with several large garbage cans, each neatly marked for different types of garbage, and a medium-sized table on top of which stand paper buckets—the type in which one buys fried chicken from take-home stores. The buckets are covered with their paper lids. Attached to each lid there is a white cardboard label bearing—printed in ink—the mother's name, the doctor's name, the time of delivery, the sex of the "item," the time of gestation. Inside each bucket, I have been told, there is a fetus and its placenta stored in formaldehyde. At the end of the day the buckets are transferred to the laboratory where the contents are examined for abnormalities. That done, they are collected in a large plastic bag, and a special messenger takes them to a sister hospital in possession of an incinerator. There they are burned.

One day, driven by my own need to arrive at a measure of clarity, I go into the little room, place my stuff on the floor next to the garbage cans, and pull on a pair of rubber gloves. Planting myself in front of the table, balanced, legs slightly apart, I remove with one hand the lid of a bucket. The sharp fumes of formaldehyde instantly hurt the insides of my nose and throat. The smell also brings with it the long-forgotten memory of fetal pigs. The association strikes me as unseemly; nevertheless I remember, with unwanted total recall, the misery of my sophomore year in college, when in Bio. I, every Wednesday from three to five, for six months, we dissected the fetal pig. On the first day of class the instructor brought in a huge container filled with formaldehyde and floating pigs. He fished out one pig for each student, tagged with the student's last name, giving the impression that the pig was a lost, finally returned relative, in regrettable shape.

I look inside the bucket in front of me. There is a small naked person in there floating in a bloody liquid—plainly the tragic victim of a drowning accident. But then perhaps this was no accident, because the body is purple with bruises and the face has the agonized tautness of one forced to die too soon. I have seen this face before, on a Russian soldier lying on a frozen snow-covered hill, stiff with death and cold.

I take the lid off all the buckets. All of them. I reach up to the shelf above this bucket graveyard tabletop and take down a pair of forceps. With them I pull aside in each bucket the placenta, which looks like a cancerous mushroom shrouding the fetus. With the forceps I lift the fetuses, one by one. I lift them by an arm or a leg, leaving, as I return them again, an additional bruise on their purple, wrinkled, acid-soaked flesh. Finally, I lift a very large fetus whose position is such that, rather than its face, I first see its swollen testicles and abnormally large stiff penis. I look at the label. Mother's name: Catherine Atkins; doctor's name: Saul Marcus; sex of item: male; time of gestation: twenty-four weeks.

I remember Catherine. She is seventeen, a very pretty blond girl. Not very bright. This is Master Atkins—to be burned tomorrow—who died for his mother's sake. But then I remember twelve-year-old Debbie, pregnant by her stepfather-uncle; and once again, like everyone else on the saline floor, I lose the lasting clarity and durable conviction which for a moment I thought I had found.

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Portrait of a Survivor

Dorothy Rabinowitz

In September 1972 the U.S. Justice Department instituted deportation proceedings against Hermine Braunsteiner Ryan—who was by then married to an American citizen and living in New York—in connection with war crimes perpetrated when she was Vice Kommandant of Maidanek and Ravensbrueck concentration camps. The hearings ended abruptly in March 1973, when the West German government asked for and obtained the extradition of Mrs. Ryan.

ON THE last day of the Braunsteiner deportation hearings several witnesses waited outside the courtroom for the proceedings to begin. One, a merry-eyed blonde woman, hovering near the door of the courtroom, was waiting, she said, in the hope that she would encounter Hermine Ryan entering the courtroom. In this she had been disappointed: Mrs. Ryan, her husband, and her attorney had either come very early or somehow got by the door without being seen, and now they sat by themselves, waving off everyone who came near. The blonde witness, whose name was Stella, explained that she waited for Mrs. Ryan because she wanted the chance to walk up close to her and say something to her that she would hear. What it was she would say when the moment came, she did not know in advance; and she was not concerned about it.

"Something would come to me," she said with assurance, when asked what it was she would want to say. Clearly torn between her desire to stay and talk with the other witnesses and her desire to keep an eye on Mrs. Ryan and the inside of the courtroom, she divided her attention between them. Now she turned to the group in the hall and exchanged whispers with someone, now she turned to canvass the small entryway to the courtroom, now she returned to murmur a word to a witness: now, while she murmured, she flicked a watchful eye toward the door.

In general outline her experiences during the years 1939-45 were like that of the other witnesses, some of whom were already seated inside the courtroom: those who had also known Hermine Braunsteiner thirty years earlier, who now stared across the room at her, who sometimes stood up and turned their faces toward her so that she might see them if she looked.

"She looks very little changed," a witness said.

"The same legs."

The prospective witnesses who appeared in the hearing room that day were known to one another, being as they were part of the large community of survivors who lived in the Kew Gardens-Forest Hills area of Queens. The detached or semi-detached private houses in those pleasant neighborhoods were a far cry from the apartments in Coney Island or the Bronx where most of them had begun their lives in America. They had worked their way slowly over the past twenty-five years, moving as their economic state allowed to better apartments, safer neighborhoods, until they were able to afford a house in Kew Gardens.

STELLA, the blonde woman who waited for a chance to say something to Mrs. Ryan, lived with her husband and their two children in one of those pleasant, quiet neighborhoods in Kew Gardens. She was, to all appearances, the most girlish of the witnesses who appeared at the Immigration Services hearings that day, though she was roughly the same age—in her mid-forties. Even as she stalked the halls in the anxious atmosphere outside the hearing room, keeping a watchful eye on Braunsteiner and her party, it could be seen that she was one of those people who would never bring the proper face to dark occasions. Her feelings about Hermine Braunsteiner were colder and harder than those of anyone present; yet as she pursued her quarry with her eyes and waited, her natural disposition asserted itself and she looked —there was no other word for it—sunny. When once or twice she smiled at someone she knew, the smile was that of a hostess for a guest of honor, a face-wreathing flash of light that made anyone who saw it feel how preposterous was the idea of her connection with the matters that were to go on in the hearing room that day.

All the same, she belonged there, and no one was more aware of it than she. The moment Braunsteiner's picture appeared in the New York *Times,* Stella said, she had run to the phone to call a friend, a woman she had known in Maidanek.

DOROTHY RABINOWITZ is a regular contributor to COMMENTARY and the co-author of *Home Life,* a novelistic portrait of old-age homes. The present study, in somewhat different form, will appear as a chapter in her forthcoming book, *New Lives,* to be published by Knopf later this month.

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"Remember our *Aufseherin*, Hermine?" she had asked the friend.

"Who could forget her?"

"And do you have the *Times* today? Go look at it."

The friend returned to the phone. "You are damned right. It's her—you are damned right."

It was all, apparently, that the friend was able to say for some time.

"Not only that; she's living right here," her caller pointed out.

That night she had not fallen asleep at all, but had lain wide awake figuring out what she should do, and thinking about Maidanek. She did not have to face a traumatic rush of memory, as some other survivors might have when something made a buried aspect of the past suddenly rear up at them in the midst of their postwar lives. She was used to thinking about Maidanek and the other places she had been, used to talking with her friends who had been there with her. Each had obtained certain kinds of information about life and people from her experience. One had learned, and she was deeply interested in the fact, that if you asked a person to kill you, he would never do it; that asking for death robbed people of the will to kill you—people who otherwise could have killed you with no trouble at all. Another had learned, and it was an observation every one of them heartily agreed with, that if you had to ask an enemy for mercy, it was better that the enemy should be a man than a woman, because there was no chance at all with a woman; the women they had known as captors had invariably been crueler than the men.

For years they had pieced together the details of the past: what one forgot, another remembered. The number of friends who had survived with her was small, but they were close; and when they talked about the time in the camps, it was not entirely horror that drew them back, but also the memory of their youth, a part of which was recalled to them vividly in the shared memories of the camps.

One of the other witnesses against Mrs. Braunsteiner, a friend of Stella's, recalled some time later that it was ridiculous to believe that none of them had ever made a joke or laughed in the death camp. They had made jokes about their appearance, about their shorn heads, which made them look like plucked chickens, or they told one another, laughing, "Tomorrow you'll be soap." They did these things—as they sang songs—to keep their nerve up, and they were able to do them, she observed, only because they were young.

One day the group from Maidanek gathered in a kitchen in Queens. The purpose of the meeting was to settle a dispute over the ingredients of a mysterious soup the Germans had given them on occasion. Because it had a slightly sweetish taste—the reason they remembered it all these years—they had devoured it, and had looked on the days when that soup was distributed almost as holidays.

Each of the women had her own ideas of what might have gone into it. The one thing all of them remembered was that there had been a few grains of rice floating around on the top; they supposed, too, there must have been some sugar in it. But by the end of the afternoon, after following all their notions, after stirring, throwing different things in, and trying new mixtures, they had collectively failed to achieve the taste of the concentration-camp soup. During their captivity, food, only food, had obsessed them. Starved, living on a diet of ersatz coffee and bread twice a day, or water and potato peelings with worms floating around (which they ate with the rest because of the protein), they talked and dreamed food. They planned elaborate menus; they listened to fantastic recipes full of rich ingredients, and even invented their own, though some of them had never cooked anything in their lives. Now, years later, the long hold of that obsession took another turn, and in the midst of plenty they tried to recreate the one food that, in those days, had been the object of their greatest desire: the soup with the sweetish taste.

It had to be something chemical, they concluded after they had given up, because they had never tasted anything remotely like that sweetish taste after they left the camp. Stella, who had been one of the organizers of the experiment, was of that opinion herself.

It took some knowing her to see that there was sometimes calculation in the great blue eyes she turned to the world. All the same, she showed less of it than was usual in women of conspicuous good looks, looks into which there had gone a certain amount of work and planning. She had a strong bent toward the flirtatious, and just as strong a bent toward straightforwardness, tendencies that did not, in her, rule one another out. It was the first that accounted for the inviting smile that hovered about her eyes and mouth, the frequent faint flutterings of lashes, and the many confidingly uttered "I don't have to tell you why's" that punctuated her conversation. The second accounted for the conversation itself, in which there was usually no artifice, except as circumstances required it, and then it was an artifice of such a frank sort that it did not seem to differ very much from straightforwardness.

On the street where she lived in Kew Gardens there were nine houses together, and no fewer than eight of them were owned by Polish Jews who had survived the war and the camps. Around the corner stood six more houses similarly inhabited by families of survivors. Cohesive Jewish neighborhoods are, of course, no rarity in New York, but in the Bronx, Brooklyn, or formerly, the Lower East Side of New York, such cohesiveness was based simply on the propensity of Jews of every variety

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to make their homes where other Jews lived. In Williamsburg and Crown Heights, Brooklyn, Hasidic and other Orthodox Jews lived in tight neighborhoods to protect a religious way of life. But in Kew Gardens, parts of Forest Hills, Bayside, and the Upper West Side of Manhattan, small Jewish communities had been formed entirely on the basis of the fact that its members had once shared a common fate.

The builder of the houses on her street was a Polish Jew himself, who had come to America after the war. In addition to the houses in Kew Gardens, he had built in Bayside twenty more blocks of houses which were also largely inhabited by Polish Jewish survivors. In part, this had come about because these survivors had reasoned, when they were ready to buy houses, that they were best off dealing with one like themselves, particularly if there was trouble about repairs or some other problem regarding the house. There still lingered in them, years after 1949 and 1950, when they had arrived, something of the sense they had had then: that the connection between American Jews and themselves was only slightly less remote than the connection between themselves and American Gentiles. But beyond the practical reasons, there was another, perhaps more important, factor dictating their choice: that in buying a house from such a builder, they stood an excellent chance of living next door to, or across the street from, people who had shared their experience, people who could not quite be strangers to them though they had never laid eyes on them before—neighbors the crucial facts of whose lives they knew before they were even introduced to them.

Though Stella lived in such an enclave, she was of two minds about it. On the one hand, there were certain comforts to be derived from the arrangements. On the other, they spoke Polish too much, a fact she disapproved of, though she did it herself; and they all stuck to one another too much. Her heavy accent made her unhappy, but that was not the main reason she disapproved of the way her circle of friends clung to one another and to their old language. The main reason had to do with her feelings about her own Americanness.

She was devoted to America, a feeling that had grown deep and prideful over the years. The devotion was one that all her friends shared without exception, and there was irony in the fact that in this, too, they felt they had only each other for understanding. As far as they could see, Americans did not have such feelings, or if they did, they did not display them. American democracy was a lie, the survivors had furthermore heard from other Americans during the upheavals of the 60's; American society was a destroyer. As for the government, its designs and operations were in no significant way different from those of a fascist state.

Like most survivors, Stella and her circle of friends were astounded by these views. That they should hear America called a fascist state! America, of all countries! Yet they had heard it quite often in the 60's; they continued to hear it in the 70's, and invariably, when they listened to this description of America, they became enraged.

America had its problems, they conceded with pursed lips, and not the least of those problems was its citizens, who were spoiled and indifferent.

"COME HERE," Stella summoned her daughter once. "Tell me what you did in school for Memorial Day celebration." A picnic, the daughter replied; the teachers had taken them to a park for games and sandwiches.

"A picnic," her mother sniffed, with the satisfied air of one whose worst suspicions had been borne out.

That was not the only thing. She herself had seen the local Memorial Day parade. "Who was marching in this parade? Three people: one man with crutches, one old woman who could hardly stand up was dragging herself along, and one person from the Salvation Army."

It was a disgrace, really, when you thought about it, because one thing about Poland, rain or shine, everybody had come out to show respect for the patriotic holidays. And what was Poland to deserve such treatment? Smart Poland had been, though, and right to make its people care in that way. And what there was to care about in Poland you could imagine; but it was the right attitude.

"Only to knock America," Henrika, another prospective witness at Hermine Braunsteiner's deportation hearings, said bitterly another time. "To spit on America. To call her such things: fascistic, repressive—whatever they say. The blood boils up in my face when I hear these words." And her hand flew to her face to contain the blood there now when she thought of the words. What did those who spit on America know about these things? About fascism or repression?

Stella, whose blood did not show quite so much when it boiled, always concluded grandly when this subject of America-haters came up, "It's a pity," a phrase of many uses, one that she had a talent for employing in the particular way which conveys that the speaker intends no charity whatever toward the object of pity. It was her way to look on the bright side. She was not one to brood long over anything either. What was the use of it? So much had happened to brood over; to begin the job would leave no room for living and enjoying the life she had.

If she found she was feeling sad too long about something, she would soon find a way to make herself stop. At such times she would reflect on her life, and how she had come through everything. What was it all for? Was she alive so that she could make herself miserable over some little thing or other?

People liked her and she accepted it as natural that they should. There had been, of course, in her circle of friends, those who took offense at

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things she had said or done, but they were few, and she liked to think she paid no attention to them. Injured feelings, imagined insults—it was precisely these unimportant things people were forever thinking about. She seldom quarreled with anyone, though she listened at some length to the quarrels of others, and was interested in the details. Once, one of her friends had made it clear that she was angry at her. Jealousy was probably at the root of the anger, Stella reasoned. The friend, who had been given charge of a certain guest list, had failed to submit Stella's name, with the result that she did not get to attend an event that she was supposed to, and that she wanted to attend. There were other signs of hostility as well. Of the friend's behavior, Stella remarked only, "It's a pity," in her usual way. If one person took a dislike to her, it could not be helped. If one person was of a jealous disposition, there was nothing to be done. There were other friends. It was, again, one of those things certainly not important enough to dwell on.

THE FACTS of her life were these, if she wanted to dwell on them. She had been born in Warsaw, of fairly well-to-do parents, the owners of several shoe stores and a tannery. When she was sixteen, the Germans sent her, along with her two older sisters and their father, to the Maidanek camp in Lublin; her mother several months earlier had been deported to Treblinka. One day in Maidanek, she was caught trying to throw a piece of bread to her father in the men's camp, with the result that she was brought before Hermine Braunsteiner. Braunsteiner had ordered twenty-five lashes, and watched while the guard administered them with a bullwhip. As a result of the whipping, she was unable to work, and her name had been automatically put on the list of those destined for the gas chamber.

After the whipping, she had been carried back to the barracks, bleeding and semiconscious, unable to stand for two days much less to report for work. But her older sister Rutka, who was among those just then being sent out of Maidanek to work at Skarzysko, a labor camp, contrived to change places with her. The two hundred women selected for work at Skarzysko first passed a body check to determine that they were fit and healthy, and then they received clean uniforms, with different markings from those worn by the Maidanek inmates. In some way—Stella never learned how—after passing the body check, Rutka had exchanged numbers and clothes with her. With the help of other women in the barracks, she pushed Stella, still stupefied, into the center of the crowd so that she would not be noticed, and sent her off with the group leaving for Skarzysko.

There, Jewish inmate doctors were able to salve her wounds, and it was not many days before she was up and around, able to work, though she was still in great pain. About ten days after she arrived, she learned the outcome of her sister's plan to save her. Rutka, being strong and healthy, believed that she could safely take her younger sister's name and number; that when the day came that her sister's name was called, as it was clear it would be, and she was summoned to go with those selected for the gas chamber, Rutka would be able to show herself as she was—fit and healthy and capable of work—to convince the SS that her death selection was an error. Rutka knew the risk and took it, friends later reported to Stella. The week after Stella had left Maidanek and her name was called as expected, Rutka took her place in line among those selected for death. But neither her healthy appearance nor her arguments of fitness persuaded the SS that her selection was a mistake. She was marched off with the others to the gas chamber and death.

Stella remained in the labor camp for a year. Skarzysko, in 1944, was a hotbed of rumor. With the Russians coming nearer every day, word circulated that either the Germans planned to take all the inmates to Germany to work or they planned to kill them.

The camp had no crematorium or gas chamber, but a small forest nearby was used as an execution place. As the Russian guns came nearer, the Germans began to bury some of the bodies that were exposed in the forest. The guards were becoming nervous, and the more nervous they became the more the rumors flew among the inmates. One night, the camp commandant assembled them and told them that the next day they were to be evacuated to Germany. Each person would get two days' food, the length of time it would take them to get to Germany. In Germany they would be housed and fed in comfortable quarters, he promised, and given jobs that were not very hard. Few of the inmates believed him. Despite the curfew, they ran about from one barracks to another, discussing what the Germans really intended, whether they would dare to kill them all with the Russians coming so near, or whether they would do so just because of that fact.

Late that night, she learned that the inhabitants of the White House, as the white-painted barracks of the *kapos* (prisoner-guards) was called, had escaped. If the *kapos* had run, she reasoned, it was because of what was going to happen the next day; they usually had excellent information. Her friends among the inmates were of the same opinion; but as night came on they began to shout to one another, "Quiet, quiet!" If they didn't have a few hours' sleep, they said, they would not be able to move in the morning.

She could not sleep for trying to figure out how the White House inhabitants had got out, and why. Then, in the midst of her figuring, she quietly got up and made her way to the outhouse at the end of the camp. There, behind the outhouse, she saw how the barbed wire had been stretched,

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and that this was how the others had escaped. The barbed wire of this camp was not electrified; there were two fences, six feet apart, between which the guard patrolled the camp perimeters.

A moment later—without knowing in advance what she meant to do—she walked from the outhouse and plunged through the stretched barbed wire to the other side.

Hearing the voices of the guards as they made their rounds, she ran straight into the forest. There, almost at once, she stumbled over the bodies of the *kapos* who had made their "escape" from the White House. Years later, after the war had ended, she learned that the White House inhabitants, including the chief *kapo,* had paid a German to get them out of the camp, and that the German had taken the money and shot them all as soon as they entered the forest. One of them, Ulrich, was still alive when she fell over him, a young man her own age who lay gasping on the ground. At the same time, she could hear the voices of the Germans, now there with her in the forest. Unable to tell the direction of the voices and thus to decide which way she could safely run, she dropped down on the ground next to Ulrich and pretended to be dead. When the Germans came, they kicked the bodies. Lying under her arm, Ulrich made no sound. A German guard pronounced them dead and walked off.

She lay there a long time, until she heard shouts and screaming from the camp and the noise of the trucks, which told her that the evacuation of inmates had begun. Ulrich was dead; she had felt his body shudder underneath her as he died. One hand and the side of her face were covered with Ulrich's blood. She wiped the blood with the underside of her skirt. Then she smeared spittle on her face and pressed it to the ground to wash with the moisture of the morning dew. In vain she searched the floor of the forest for leaves to clean the blood off, but she was in a forest where there were only pine needles.

Having wiped her cheek as clean as she could, she walked in the forest until she could see that she was close to a highway of some sort. On the highway she met two small girls, who showed her the way to a nearby railway station. In the railway station lavatory she found a small cracked mirror, which nevertheless showed her clearly enough that her face was still smeared with blood and that her earlier washing had only lightened it and spread it all over her face. After cleaning her face and combing her hair with her fingers, she entered a train, which had just pulled into the station, and made straight for the lavatory. From time to time, people who wanted to use the toilet banged on the door and then went away grumbling when it did not open; she had locked herself in, so that the conductor could not ask her for a ticket. But after a while—she had no memory, later, of how long—when she heard the train slowing down for its next stop, she knew she could no longer stand to be locked up there, whatever else might happen. No one challenged her when she opened the door. A man looked briefly at her as he paused in wrestling with a suitcase to let her by. Then she was out of the train. It was dark, although the station was well lit and she was able to read clearly a sign that said, Czestochowa.

As others found who had escaped, she was to discover that impulse and improvisation alone would carry one far, so long as the danger was great. Any deception was feasible and any loneliness bearable when necessity demanded; it was when the external dangers seemed to lessen that the inner ones began to make their claim. In Czestochowa, she was, without knowing it, still at the beginning of the tangled set of circumstances that began with her escape and would not end for many months—circumstances that became more complicated and dangerous at each stage, right up to the end. But already, in Czestochowa, she had begun to feel less afraid.

At the station she saw a nun. "I have a problem, Sister," she whispered to the nun.

"Tell Jesus your problem; he will help you," the nun told her.

"Jesus cannot help me in this," she replied. Then she pointed to a trainload of Polish civilians that had arrived in the station. It was just at the end of the abortive Polish insurrection of 1944, when the Germans were arresting Poles and transporting them to concentration camps. She told the nun she had escaped from the train and was afraid of going to the German concentration camp.

The nun took her by the hand and brought her to a cloister, where she was fed and clothed and shown a place to sleep. Then in the morning, she was brought before the Mother Superior and questioned about the insurrection in Warsaw and what she had seen there.

She was able to draw on her memory of an earlier uprising she had witnessed, the April 1943 revolt against the Germans by the Jews of the Warsaw ghetto. She told the Mother Superior about the burning buildings and the people jumping from them, how the Germans had flushed the Polish fighters from their bunkers and shot them down. The Mother Superior told Stella that her convent had sheltered other Polish girls like herself, that she would be able to stay and work for her keep without fear. She was given a rosary and sent to prayers with the sisters and the other girls who had found shelter there. Remembering bits of the Hail Mary, which she had sometimes heard the family's Gentile maid recite, Stella moved her lips silently and said morning prayers without anyone noticing that she barely knew the words. Afterward she found a prayer book and memorized the Hail Mary. In the next few days, she fell into the convent routine, which consisted of hard work in the kitchen run by the nuns, and frequent

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prayer, which was no problem once she knew the words.

She had begun to feel safe, and the effects of that feeling showed themselves at once in the overwhelming urge she then had to confess to the Mother Superior and the others that she was a Jew and not one of them. The need to tell this particular truth was to arise each time she found herself in sheltering hands. The strength of the need was great, coming as it did from the urgent wish to end her isolation, from a craving to be comforted by those who had comfort to give: the ultimate comfort they could give her being that, though they knew the worst—that she was a Jew—they would still keep her in safety. It was a test of herself, and of the friendships she formed with the people who sheltered her, albeit while she was disguised as a Gentile. It was in part, too, a search, and she was not alone of her kind in making it, an effort to uncover some final proof in refutation of what the Nazis had said and experience had shown must certainly be true, which was that everyone, not only the Germans, wanted the Jews dead.

Later, she learned to fight the need to share her secret; but in the convent in Czestochowa she gave in to it. She was moved to do so by an especially beautiful painting of the Virgin Mary that hung in the chapel. Staring at it, she was able to talk herself into believing that the soft smile of Mary was really intended for her, that it was meant as a sign of reassurance, and willingly she took the promise of the Virgin's smile to heart. She decided to tell the priest she was a Jew during confession. As soon as she made the decision, she felt enormous relief, as though the weight of a stone had been lifted from her. The confession she had to make was not a little thing, she first whispered to the priest.

"Jesus can hear anything, my child," the priest told her.

She did not know if Jesus could hear this, she said.

"Whatever it is, it is between you and me and God," the priest assured her.

"I am a Jew, Father," she then confessed quickly. She explained how she had run away from the camp, and gone to the nun at the station. When she finished, the priest told her in a kind way not to worry, that he would speak to the Mother Superior and tell her about it. In the meantime, she did not need to continue praying with the others.

Later, the Mother Superior summoned her, and looking quite stern and unlike the Virgin Mary in the painting, she told her that she might stay only until she found another place, but that she should bear in mind that they were short of food in the convent and that by staying there she was putting others in great danger.

The next day she left the convent. After a while she made her way to another city, Cracow, and another shelter. This time she found employment with a German doctor and his wife. So kindly a couple were they that the doctor, who was attached to a German military hospital, came to her boarding house to take care of her when she fell ill, and his wife worried over her as any mother would. Again she felt the impulse to tell these people—who were as humane and loving as any she had ever met—that she was a Jew, but she could not do it, quite. After the war, she tried to trace the couple in Germany and failed. Thirty years after her escape, she still wondered what might have happened had she told them and was almost certain now that they would have accepted the truth, she had a such a clear memory of their kindness. But at the time she said nothing because the doctor and his wife were, after all, Germans. Then, too, she bore in mind that once, feeling secure while walking about the city of Cracow with the excellent pass the doctor had provided her, she had almost been arrested for throwing food to some emaciated prisoners marching by her under German guard. The guards turned her over to the police, who held her for several hours until the doctor came to identify her. When the doctor had extricated her from this trouble, he asked her why she had done it.

"I felt sorry for the people, Doctor," she told him, adding untruthfully that she did not know who the people were. Patiently, he explained that she must not go near them again, because the prisoners were Jews. Still, despite this, she knew him well enough to believe that she might have told him she was a Jew, and that he could probably never have brought himself to betray her—not her.

After this episode, there began a final series of mishaps that took her from Poland deeper and deeper into Germany. The turn of events began when, as seemed ever to be so then, the Russians were advancing; with the hospital and its wounded having to be evacuated, the doctor got her, along with himself and his wife, on a German troop train, which took them to Dresden just at the time the British were bombing that city into an inferno. When the train arrived at the station, she slipped away from the doctor, for protective as he was he would, she knew, only take her farther into Germany. Alone in Dresden, she pretended to have been driven mad by the bombing and sat in a park under some trees while everyone else was in shelters and the British planes raked the city methodically, block by block. She saw that the planes were flying low, that they knew where their bombs were going, and that they were not aiming at parks and trees. In any event, if she had to die, it would at least not be underground with Germans, but under trees in the open air.

Afterward she wandered through Dresden's ruins, passing herself off as a German, feeding her-

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self at the emergency kitchens. In a matter of two days, however, she found that she could no longer wander alone. For that reason she attached herself to a line of Polish prisoners who had been marched past her near the outskirts of the city. So long as she did not go as a Jew, she did not greatly fear captivity.

Finally, outside Leipzig, she ended up in the hands of American troops. She and two hundred or so Polish prisoners had been locked into an underground bunker when the Americans broke in. One of them picked her up and carried her out, shouting at the top of his lungs. *"Schnell! Schnell! Out!"* the soldiers yelled, pushing and dragging everyone, and a moment later, after they were outside, there was a terrific blast which threw her and the soldier carrying her to the ground. After locking the prisoners in the bunker, the Germans had set time bombs to blow them up; virtually at the last minute the Americans had learned of it, and had rushed the bunker to get them out.

The American who had picked her up and carried her rushed away after setting her on her feet. A little while later, he found her again, and gave her a loaf of bread. Ravenous, she stuffed her mouth with the bread and as she did so, there was a click nearby. She turned, and saw an American taking a picture of her just at the moment she was pushing the bread into her mouth. What did she care? Nothing at all. How like a monkey in a zoo she looked to them, and she knew it, and it did not matter to her at all. The American looked like a god. What more could you want of the Almighty himself if he had come? He carried her in his arms, he gave her bread; he brought the war to an end.

Afterward she jumped on the tanks with some of the other girls and rode with the Americans to Leipzig. And there in Leipzig she saw the sight that was to bring her joy for hours. The Germans had hung white flags everywhere, on all the doors and windows of the city. The next morning, as she walked about the streets, she was to burst into tears looking at those same flags, because now the catastrophe was all over, for certain, but only she was left alive of her whole family; just then, however, riding into Leipzig, she thought of no such thing. The Americans had directed them to go into any of the houses and help themselves to food and clothing. There was no need to worry, they would be nearby, the GI's assured them in broken German; later on, someone would come and check, to see if they were all right.

The first house they entered was empty of people. Whoever had lived there had left everything —all the clothes in the closets, food in the pantry. It was a proper house, the first that some of them had been inside for years, with overstuffed chairs, tables, pictures, and beds. She and the other girls ran to the pantry, opened everything they found, and ate. Beans, sugar, cheese, butter—they mixed it all together on their plates and ate, and when they finished, the formerly neat kitchen looked as though banquets had been held there for several nights, with no one bothering to clean up after any of them. Afterward they ripped off the uniforms they wore, with the big "P" on the back, and rummaged in the closets to find skirts and dresses. Indifferent to the fact that none of the clothes they found fit them, they put them on. Then someone came up with currant wine, which was stored in the cellar, and Stella herself found some stuff made of fermented blueberries. For the first time in her life, she drank and was drunk, so that she ended the first day of freedom retching and throwing her insides up.

In the next days, they talked about taking revenge, and they heard talk of it. On whom could you take revenge? On the streets of Leipzig there were only old people to be seen. For a short time the Americans had quartered her in the house of an elderly woman. Once, she had let the woman see the lash marks on her back after the woman began, shyly, to ask questions about her: how she came to be there in Leipzig and what had happened to bring a young girl so far from home. After seeing her back, the old woman had run weeping from the house, and returned with several of the neighbors, elderly women also. The neighbors had to see the lash marks, too.

"See—is this what our brothers have done?" the old woman asked them.

And this was what there was to take revenge on in Leipzig—crying old people, who were like her own grandparents.

STELLA and her husband met just after the war ended; he was an officer in the Polish army. He had found her standing on a street one bitter cold day, trying to sell some linens and sheets for her German landlady. He was a Jew, he told her, after inviting her for coffee—a fact that she was certain of anyway before he told her—and was, like her, the only one left of his family. Not three days later, he proposed, which was hasty even for the way marriages were made in those days of chaos and of so many familyless people just after the war; and three weeks later, after he received official permission from his superiors in the army, they were married.

The ceremony was performed by a rabbi who arrived for the occasion half dead, because the groom, who had found him in Breslau a great many miles away, had no alternative but to pack him onto the back of his motorcycle and ride with him at top speed for almost a day in order to get him to the wedding. For her wedding night the bride had nothing at all appropriate to wear, a condition her German landlady undertook to correct by sitting up the night before, sewing her a pair of pajamas out of a set of green silk striped curtains she happened to have in her parlor. As a final festive touch, the landlady had trimmed the low-cut pajama bosom with the green flowered

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border that until then had adorned the curtain tops. The wedding party itself—to which several hundred Polish army comrades of the groom came bearing gifts, among them a goat and a cow that proved later to have been stolen from a farmer—lasted for three days.

HER LOOKS were important to him, now as then.

"A woman should be glamorous," he pronounced once when his wife was not present. "I like to see her wearing jewels and furs, all these things, to highlight."

"Yes, yes, yes," the object of his approval said languidly, later. "It's very important to him. It's important to all of them."

She had no objection to this taste for glamor, she gave one to understand, but it was not something that she herself considered important; that he and other male creatures felt as they did was a fact of life; she did not blame them for it.

It was in her early thirties, just after the birth of her second child, in America, that tragedy almost struck her down. Because she had never looked more beautiful than she did then, and because once the war ended she never gave any thought to other dangers that might come her way, she could not accept what the doctors told her—that she had cancer, advanced to the third stage, when no cures might be expected from surgery. Possibly she might try radiation therapy, which would give her perhaps a year of life more; though she asked him to, the doctor could not consider operating on her. "I don't like mortal cases on my operating table," he explained.

That night, and for several days thereafter, she told herself that the luck which had spared her thus far had finally run out. It was luck, and more than luck: it was Rutka, who had died in her place, and her own driving impulse to run anywhere, to do and say anything to stay alive. But mostly being spared was a matter of luck; she said it often. Smarter people than herself had tried to figure out ways to stay alive; they had devoted themselves day and night to the task of planning how they could survive this way and that—brilliant people they had been, some of them—and they had been killed anyway.

Still, the fact was confirmed by more than one physician. From one of them she had obtained a list of surgeons who did the sort of operation she wanted to have, and had gone methodically down the list, submitting to tests and receiving from five of them the same advice as the first doctor had given. Radiation therapy was the only alternative; they would not undertake a hopeless operation. A week or so before she was to enter a hospital to begin treatment she came to the last doctor on the list. When he asked why she persisted in her efforts to have an operation, she said that to have a cancer cut out was better than radiation, which gave no hope at all, only a few more months. The doctor agreed to perform the operation, and of course she lived.

After the operation, and a two-month stay in the hospital, she went home with certain goals in mind. She would be satisfied to live, she bargained, just until the younger child started kindergarten, just until the older one had his bar mitzvah, events that were due in a year's time. After that, let come what may. When the year passed, she bargained for another short time, and then another, resolving always that when she had lived to achieve them, when she had seen the younger one do this or that, or when the older one finished school, she would ask no more. Let what would happen, happen. In that way, as a series of bargains, the years slid by; it was luck, it was destiny—whatever it was, she did not want to think. The crisis only confirmed her way of looking at things; her disposition was even sunnier than before. When some unhappiness came to her, she shook it off as a dog shakes off water, partly because she did not believe in it: what right had she to unhappiness? Since the days in the concentration camp she had absorbed the idea that depression was the beginning of death; that was the reason they had sung songs in the camps—school songs, Polish songs, anything that came into their mouths.

It must have been surprising to her family and friends, therefore, when, happy and contented as she was, a great restlessness took hold of her in the summer of 1974. Nothing would do but that she must pack up suddenly and go to Poland. Her husband was not at all willing that she should have her way, though in the end, as usual, she did what she wanted to do.

In Warsaw there were friends who were happy to receive her. A few days after her arrival in Warsaw, she took up the real reason for her visit, and announced to the friends with whom she was staying that she planned to visit Maidanek. They, as she had expected, were horrified. But they soon saw that nothing would dissuade her: and so, sighing, since she could not be permitted to go alone, they assigned themselves the task of driving her there. They themselves had never been there. It was an unhappy, unnecessary visit, a grim end to the reunion and the festivities they had all been enjoying, so far as they were concerned.

It takes three hours to drive from Warsaw to Lublin by car, and then five minutes more to get from Lublin to Maidanek. Along the road from Lublin to the camp, signs announced that the State Museum of Maidanek was ahead. In that area of Lublin, the weather is always cold because of a chilly cross-wind. Even in summer a cold wind blows, making the climatic conditions unfavorable for farming of any sort. It is, in fact, difficult to imagine what activities the climate of the place does favor, except perhaps the ones for which the Germans chose it.

She saw, of course, as they approached the camp, that it was not as she remembered it.

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FIRST, an enormous monument,as tall and wide as any block in Kew Gardens, Queens, where she now lived, looked out at them. Next to it was the office of the Maidanek Museum's director, and there—with what intention she herself did not know—she went first. Leaving her friends outside, she presented herself to a woman who said she was the secretary to the director. She wanted to see the director, she informed the secretary.

"The director is a busy man," the secretary observed, and then inquired what her business was.

"I have business," she told the secretary. "I am a former prisoner, a Jew. From America."

The secretary ran to the director, and he at once opened the door and ushered her into his office. He was a slim, well-dressed Pole who seemed to be in his mid-thirties, and he greeted her with a shy but hospitable smile. He himself would show her around the camp, he told her, and he did. Later, he explained to her approvingly that he wished to do this because he had never before met any Jew among the visitors to Maidanek—not one, at any rate, who announced the fact. There must have been many, he was certain, but Jews in Poland, he told her with some delicacy, were more assimilated than elsewhere.

"Therefore they are not very forward about these matters," he explained.

"Really," she said to the director, marveling as though she had just heard of the behavior of some strange new form of life whose habits had till that moment remained unknown to her. Really. Well, in her own country, America, she assured him, the case was different; but to each his own, of course.

"In America if you are Jewish, you don't have to be afraid to say it," she told him nicely, without malice. She saw how kind and interested the young director was, that he had a humane face. He had, he told her, been a child during the war, and he believed very much in the work of the State Museum.

He was also an excellent guide, though he was clearly a busy man who was constantly interrupted by phone calls. First, he showed her and her friends the mausoleum, and explained that when the Russians had entered Maidanek, the fires in the crematoria were still burning. The Russians had collected part of the human ashes as evidence, and left a quantity of them in the ovens, which the visitors could see clearly for themselves. He showed them the barracks, which were as she remembered them, except for the flowers that visitors had placed inside them, and he explained to them what the enormous monument was meant to represent. All the time he talked, she listened, but her mind was not entirely focused on what she heard. The director then pointed out a group of students who had come to tour the camp, accompanied by guides. The students, who were in their late teens and twenties, listened somberly, their faces taut, their minds clearly concentrated on everything they heard, while their guide described the function of the hooks and the other torture devices on display. One group of twenty students stood before the whipping block while their guide explained something to them in Russian.

Stella went up to the group leader and said, in Polish, "I would like to introduce myself. I am a former prisoner here. A Jew. And I am from the United States." The guide translated her words into Russian, and solemnly, one by one, all the students lined up to pump her hand.

After Stella had rejoined her own group, the director was called away to answer a phone call, and the friend's husband went off to take some photographs of the monument. As soon as they were alone, Stella pulled her friend back to the mausoleum, and to the furnace where the ashes were.

The furnace was a little over five feet deep, not big enough to contain bodies of more than average height, shrunken though those bodies might be at the time they were shoveled in. To right this difficulty, a saw had been kept handily by, chained to a table at the side of the oven, where it still could be seen.

"Hold my legs," she suddenly directed her friend.

"What are you doing?" the friend asked in alarm.

"Just hold my legs, I want to get some ashes," she answered. Without further ado she crossed the small space between the spectators' railing and the oven door, and crawled without great difficulty inside the oven itself, while her friend held her legs, too horrified to do more than obey. The ashes were quite far back in the stove. Stella inched forward until her entire body, all but her ankles, was inside the oven. The ashes lay underneath and around her, small whitish heaps in the darkness.

In one fist she had the vinyl envelope that had held her pocket rain bonnet, and into it she scooped the ashes. When the envelope was full, she began backing out of the oven, but found that she could not. Inside, the mouth of the stove was not as wide as it had appeared from the outside, so that for all her pushing, she could only get her legs out; the rest of her body was trapped in the stove. Until now she had concentrated on what she was doing, entirely unaware of any feelings. Now she saw that she was trapped, and a great blind panic seized her; she closed her eyes, so that she should not see the walls of the stove around her, and began to kick her legs madly and shout for her friend to help.

Finally, she managed to wriggle out, still with the envelope in her fist. Naturally, she was covered with ashes.

The director was expecting her in his office, where he had invited her for coffee before she left. When she got there, he stared at her a little and told her she had some dirt on her suit.

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Yes, yes, she told him; she had stumbled somewhere, and it had rained, but it was nothing; a good dry cleaning would fix it.

IN THE car going back to Warsaw, she began to cry, and her friend cried, too. For different reasons, she almost cried again, a few days later, when she got to the Warsaw airport and strapped herself into the seat of an American plane. Never, she importuned her friends later, should they fly on a Polish or any other but an American airline, if any of them wanted to go where she had been. What happiness when she entered the plane! How it embraced her! In fact, up until that moment she had not known how bad she had been feeling. The rudeness of the Polish customs guards at the airport put the finish on everything. One had even stuck his finger in a cold-cream jar—not hers, but that of the woman in front of her. On an impulse, she had decided that for them she knew no Polish, she who had been saved by her Polish, who had babbled Polish all her life, and throughout all the years in America. When the guard questioned her, she shook her head and told him in English that she did not understand. Let them prove she knew Polish: she had an American passport.

Once home, just as she expected, everyone she knew wanted some of the ashes. Other people might not understand why you would want something like those ashes from the oven at Maidanek, but to her and her friends it was natural enough: they had no graves to visit; the ashes were all they had for a memorial. Perhaps the survivors' group she belonged to might even one day build a monument to their dead, as had been done in other American cities, and the ashes could be kept there. For now, she kept what she had, little gravelly bits of uneven size, in a white envelope.

When people asked her why she had done such a horrible thing, putting her body into the oven, she claimed that she did not know for certain; that, as usual, she did not know a moment before what she was going to do. But that was not altogether true. She wanted ashes, yes, but that was not the reason she did what she did.

When one friend suggested that perhaps she was telling the ovens to claim her one last time, and another said it was guilt, she listened with an attitude that said it was all possible. Instead of any of these things, the thought kept crossing her mind that she had wanted to put herself in Rutka's place, to feel something of how it had been for her in the end, to take it upon herself. But that, too, was conjecture, not anything she knew for certain. She had done many things in her life without knowing why. You did not always have to understand why you did things, to get results.

When she came home from her trip, her usual good spirits were even better than before. Her husband had long since gotten over his anger at her peculiar need to pack up and go to Poland suddenly, and was now, plainly, just glad to see her back. The man did look quite happy, as one friend remarked to her just after her return.

"And how," she acknowledged.

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Justice (Again) to Edith Wharton

Cynthia Ozick

NEARLY FORTY years ago, Edmund Wilson wrote a little essay about an underrated American novelist and called it "Justice to Edith Wharton." She was in need of justice, he claimed, because "the more commonplace work of her later years had had the effect of dulling the reputation of her earlier and more serious work." During this last period—a stretch of about seventeen years, from (roughly) 1920 to her death in 1937—Edith Wharton's novels were best-sellers, her short stories commanded thousands of dollars; but both in mode and motivation she remained, like so many others in the 20's and 30's, a 19th-century writer. She believed in portraying character, her characters displayed the higher values, her prose was a platform for her own views. In 1937, when Wilson undertook to invigorate her reputation, the machinery of 19th-century fiction was beginning to be judged not so much as the expression of a long tradition, or (as nowadays we seem to view it) as the exhausted practice of a moribund convention, but more bluntly as a failure of talent. Wilson accounted for that apparent failure in Edith Wharton by speculating on the psychological differences between male and female writers:

> It is sometimes true of women writers—less often, I believe, of men—that a manifestation of something like genius may be stimulated by some exceptional emotional strain, but will disappear when the stimulus has passed. With a man, his professional, his artisan's life is likely to persist and evolve as a partially independent organism through the vicissitudes of his emotional experience. Henry James in a virtual vacuum continued to possess and develop his *métier*. But Mrs. Wharton had no *métier* in this sense.

What sort of "justice" is this? A woman typically writes best when her emotions are engaged; the barren female heart cannot seize the writer's trade? Only a decade ago, such a declaration would have been derided by old-fashioned feminists as a passing insolence. But even the satiric reader, contending in one fashion or another with this passage, would have been able, ten years ago, to pluck the offending notion out as a lapse in the texture of a measured and generally moderating mind.

No longer. Wilson's idea returns only to hold, and it holds nowhere so much as among the literary proponents of the current women's movement: Wilson's lapse is exalted to precept. The idea of Edith Wharton as a "woman writer" in need of constantly renewable internal stimuli, whose gifts are best sustained by "exceptional emotional strain"—all this suits the newest doctrine of sexual exclusiveness in literature. Indeed, one of the outstanding tenets of this doctrine embraces Wilson unrelentingly. "Rarely in the work now being written by women," according to an article called "Toward a Definition of the Female Sensibility,"

> does one feel the presence of writers genuinely penetrating their own experience, risking emotional humiliation and the facing-down of secret fears, unbearable wisdoms. . . . There are works, however, . . . in which one feels the heroic effort stirring,*

and there follow numerous examples of women writing well because of the stimulus of some exceptional emotional strain.

Restitution, then (one supposes), is to come to Edith Wharton not from the old-fashioned feminists, but from the newer sort, who embrace the proposition that strong emotion in women, emotion uniquely female, is what will best nourish a female literature. What we are to look for next, it follows, is an ambitious new-feminist critical work studying Wharton's "vicissitudes of . . . emotional experience" and correlating the most fevered points with the most accomplished of the fictions.

Such a work, it turns out, more extensive and more supple than Wilson's pioneer brief would suggest, has just made its appearance: Ellen Moers's *Literary Women*. Like other new feminists, Moers believes that there is such an entity as the "history of women," that there are poetic images uniquely female, and even "landscapes charged with female privacy." She writes of "how much the freedom and tactile sensations of near-naked sea bathing has meant to modern women," and insists that a scene recounting the sensation of

CYNTHIA OZICK is the author of *Trust*, a novel, *The Pagan Rabbi and Other Stories*, and, most recently, *Bloodshed and Three Novellas* (Knopf).

* Vivian Gornick, the *Village Voice*, May 31, 1973.

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walking through a field of sealike grass provides that "moment when Kate Chopin reveals herself most truly a woman writer." Edith Wharton's life —a buried life—ought, properly scrutinized, to feed such a set of sympathies, and to lure the attention of restitution. *Literary Women*, after all, is conceived of in part as a rescue volume, as a book of rehabilitation and justice: a number of writers, Moers explains, "came to life for me as women writers as they had not done before. Mrs. Gaskell and Anne Brontë had once bored me; Emily Dickinson was an irritating puzzle, as much as a genius; I could barely read Mary Shelley and Mrs. Browning. Reading them anew as women writers taught me how to get excited about these five, and others as well."

Others as well. But Edith Wharton is omitted from *Literary Women*. Her name appears only once, as an entry in an appendix. Only *The House of Mirth* is mentioned there, along with a reference, apparently by way of explanation of the larger omission, to the chapter on Edith Wharton in Alfred Kazin's *On Native Grounds*. Pursuing the citation, one discovers that Kazin, like Wilson, like the new feminists, speaks of "the need that drove her to literature." Whatever the need, it does not engage Moers; or Kazin. He advances the notion that "to Edith Wharton, whose very career as a novelist was the tenuous product of so many maladjustments, the novel became an involuted expression of self." Unlike the new feminists, Kazin will not celebrate this expression; it represents for him a "failure to fulfill herself in art." Wharton, he concludes, "remains not a great artist but an unusual American, one who brought the weight of her personal experience to bear upon a modern American literature to which she was spiritually alien."

JUSTICE TO Edith Wharton: where, then, is it to come from? Not taken seriously by the dominant criticism, purposefully ignored by the radical separatist criticism of the new feminists*—she represents an antagonism. The antagonism is not new. Wharton describes it herself in her memoir, *A Backward Glance*:

> My literary success puzzled and embarrassed my old friends far more than it impressed them, and in my own family it created a kind of constraint which increased with the years. None of my relations ever spoke to me of my books, either to praise or blame—they simply ignored them; and among the immense tribe of my cousins, though it included many with whom I was on terms of affectionate intimacy, the subject was avoided as if it were a kind of family disgrace, which might be condoned but could not be forgotten. Only one eccentric widowed cousin, living a life of lonely invalidism, turned to my novels for occasional distraction, and had the courage to tell me so.

She continues: "At first I felt this indifference acutely; but now I no longer cared, for my recognition as a writer had transformed my life."

So it is here—in this uplifting idea, "my life," this teleological and novelistic idea above all—that one will finally expect to look for Wharton's restitution "as a writer." The justice that criticism perversely fails to bring, biography will achieve.

Perhaps. The biography of a novelist contains a wonderful advantage: it accomplishes, when well executed, a kind of mimicry. A good biography is itself a kind of novel. Like the classic novel, a biography believes in the notion of "a life"—a life as a triumphal or tragic story with a shape, a story that begins at birth, moves on to a middle part, and ends with the death of the protagonist.

Despite the reliable pervasiveness of birth and death, hardly any "real" life is like that. Most simply unfold, or less than that, dreamwalk themselves out. The middle is missing. What governs is not pattern but drift. Most American lives, moreover, fail to recognize that they are sticks in a stream, and are conceived of as novels-of-progress, as purposeful *Bildungsromane* saturated with an unending hopefulness, with the notion of infinite improvement on the way toward a salubrious goal; the frontier continues to inhabit the American mentality unfailingly.

And most American biographies are written out of this same source and belief. A biography that is most like a novel is least like a life. Edith Wharton's life, though much of it was pursued outside of America, is an American life in this sense: that, despite certain disciplines, it was predicated on drift, and fell out, rather than fell into place. If other American lives, less free than hers, drift less luckily between the Scylla and Charybdis of obligation and crisis, hers drifted in a setting all horizon, in a perpetual non-circumstance clear of external necessity. She had to invent her own environment and its conditions, and while this may seem the reverse of rudderlessness, what it signifies really is movement having to feign a destination. A life with a "shape" is occasioned by what is present in that life; drift grows out of what is absent. For Edith Wharton there was—outside the writing —no destination, and no obligation to get there. She had houses, she had wealth; she chose, rather than "had," friends. She had no family (she was estranged from her brothers, and we hear nothing further about the affectionate cousins), she had no husband (though she was married to one for more than half her life), she had no children. For a long time she resented and disliked children, and was obsessed by a love for small dogs. She was Henry James's ideal American heroine: she was indeed his very heiress of all the ages; she was "free," she was cultivated both in the conventional and

* Though, to be fair, I have heard of at least one new-feminist literature class which has studied *The House of Mirth*—evidently because it is so easy to interpret its heroine as the ideal victim.

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the spiritual sense, she was gifted, acute, mobile; she appeared to be mistress of her destiny.

The destiny of such freedom is drift, and though her life was American in this, it was European in its resignation; she had no illusion that—outside the writing—she was doing more than "filling in." Her one moment of elevated and secure purpose occurred when, inspired by the model of Walt Whitman in the hospitals of the Civil War, she founded war relief agencies in France during World War I. She supervised brilliantly: she supervised her friendships, her gardeners, her guests, the particulars of her dinner parties, her households; she even, to a degree, supervised the insurmountable Henry James —she took him for long rides in her car, she demanded hours in London and tea at Lamb House, she finagled with his publisher to provide him with a handsome advance (she herself was the secret philanthropist behind the scenes), she politicked to try and get him the Nobel Prize for literature. She supervised and commanded, but since no one demanded anything of *her* (with a single exception which, like the Gorgon's head, was not to be gazed at), she was captain, on an uncharted deep, of a ship without any imaginable port. She did everything on her own, to no real end; no one ever asked her to accommodate to any pressure of need, she had no obligations that she did not contrive or duty that she did not devise. Her necessities were self-imposed. Her tub went round and round in a sea of self-pleasing.

ALL THIS was outside the writing. One learns it from R. W. B. Lewis's prize-winning biography,* which is, like a posthumously uncovered Wharton novel, sustained by the idea of "a life." It has the fecund progression, the mastery of incident, the affectionate but balanced devotion to its protagonist, the power of suspenseful development, even the unraveling of a mysterious love story, that the "old" novel used to deliver—the novel before it became a self-referring "contemporary" art-object. In its own way it is a thesis novel: it is full of its intention to bring justice to Edith Wharton. A massive biography, almost by its weight, insists on the importance of its subject. Who would dare pass that writer by to whom a scholar-writer has dedicated, as Lewis has, nearly a decade of investigation and discovery? "They are among the handsomest achievements in our literature," he remarks of her major fictions. And adds: "I have wondered, with other admirers of Edith Wharton, whether her reputation might today stand even higher if she had been a man."

If the last statement has overtones of the new feminism—glory but for the impediment of sex—the book does not. Lewis sets out to render the life of an artist, not of a "woman artist." Unexpectedly, though it is the artist he is after, what he succeeds chiefly in giving us is the life of a woman. The "chiefly" is no small thing: it is useful to have a documented narrative of an exceptional upper-class woman of a certain American period. Still, without romanticizing what is meant by the phrase "an artist's life," there is a difference between the biography of a writer and the mode of living of a narrow American class.

Can the life justify the writer then? Or, to put it otherwise, can biography take the place of literary judgment? Lewis's book is a straightforward "tale," not a critical biography. Nor is it "psychobiography": though it yields new and revealing information about Edith Wharton's sexual experience, it does not propose to illumine the hidden chambers of the writer's sentience—as, for example, Rudy V. Redinger's recent inquiry into George Eliot's relationship to her brother Isaac, with its hunches and conjectures, purports to do, or Quentin Bell's half-study, half-memoir of Virginia Woolf. Lewis has in common with these others the revelation of a secret. In the case of Quentin Bell, it is the exact extent of Virginia Woolf's insanity; in the volume on George Eliot, the secret is the dense burden of humiliation imposed by an adored brother more cruel and rigid than society itself. And in Lewis, the secret is an undreamed-of, now minutely disclosed, adulterous affair with a journalist. In all three accounts, the writer is on the whole not there. It is understandable that the writer is mainly absent for the psychobiographer; something else is being sought. It is even more understandable that the writer should be absent for a nephew-biographer, whose preoccupation is with confirming family stories.

But if, for Lewis, the writer is not there, it is not because he fails to look for her but because she is very nearly invisible. What, through luck and diligence, he causes to become visible is almost not the point, however unpredictable and startling his discoveries are. And they are two: the surprising place of Morton Fullerton in Edith Wharton's middle years, and the appearance of a candid manuscript, written in her seventies, describing, with the lyrical explicitness of an enraptured anatomist, a fictional incestuous coupling. The manuscript and the love affair are so contrary to the established Wharton legend of cold propriety that they go far to make us look again—but only at the woman, not at the writer.

The real secret in Lewis's biography is devoid of sex, lived or imagined, though its centerpiece is a bed; and it concerns not the woman but the writer. The secret is divulged on page 353, when Wharton is fifty-one, and occupies ten lines in a volume of nearly six hundred pages. The ten lines recount a perplexing incident—"a minor fit of hysterics." The occasion is mysterious: Edith Wharton and Bernard Berenson, touring the great

* *Edith Wharton: A Biography*, Harper & Row, 592 pp., $15.00. The prizes are: the Pulitzer, the National Book Critics Circle Award, and Columbia University's Bancroft Prize.

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cities and museums of Europe together, arrive at the Hotel Esplanade in Berlin. They check into their respective rooms, and Edith Wharton, ignoring the view of the city though she has never been there before, begins to rage

> because the bed in her hotel was not properly situated; not until it had been moved to face the window did she settle down and begin to find Berlin "incomparable." Berenson thought this an absurd performance; but because Edith never harped upon the physical requirements of her literary life, he did not quite realize that she worked in bed every morning and therefore needed a bed which faced the light. It had been her practice for more than twenty years; and for a woman . . . who clung seriously to her daily stint, the need was a serious one.

The fit and its moment pass; the ensuing paragraphs tell of German politics snubbed and German music imbibed—we are returned, in short, to the life of an upper-class American expatriate tourist, privileged to travel in the company of a renowned connoisseur. But the plangent moment —an outcry over the position of a bed—dominates the book: dominates what has gone before and what is to come, and recasts both. Either the biographer can stand up to this moment—the woman revealed *as writer*—or the book falls into the drifting ash of "a life."

It falls, but it is not the biographer's fault; or not his fault alone. Edith Wharton—as writer—is to blame. She put a veil over the bed that was her work-place, and screened away the real life that was lived in it. What moves like a long after-image in the wake of reading Lewis is a procession of stately majesties: Edith Wharton always standing, always regal, always stiffly dressed and groomed, standing with her wonderfully vertical spine in the hall of one of her great houses, or in the drawing room of her Paris apartment, with her fine hand out to some equally resplendent guest, or in her gardens, not so much admiring her flowers as instructing or reprimanding the servants of her flowers; or else "motoring" through the dust of some picturesque lane in the French countryside, her chauffeur in peaked hat and leather goggles, like blinders, on a high seat in front of her, indistinguishable from the horse that still headed most vehicles on the road.

IF THIS is the Wharton myth, she made it, she wove it daily. It winds itself out like a vivid movie, yet darkly; it leaves out the window-lit bed. What went on outside the bed does not account for what went on in it. She frequented literary salons, and on a smaller scale held them (after dinner, Henry James reading aloud in the library); she talked bookishly, and with fervor; she was an intellectual. But she was not the only brilliant woman of her time and status; all of that, in the biography of a writer, weighs little.

Visualize the bed: she used a writing board. Her breakfast was brought to her by Gross, the housekeeper, who alone was privy to this inmost secret of the bedchamber. Out of bed, she would have had to be, according to her code, properly dressed, and this meant stays. In bed, her body was free, and freed her pen.

There is a famous photograph of Edith Wharton seated at a desk; we know now, thanks to the "minor fit of hysterics" at the Hotel Esplanade, how the camera lies—even though it shows us everything we might want to know about a way of life. The time is in the 1890's, the writer is in her early thirties. The desk is vast, shining, with a gold-tooled leather top; at the rear of its far surface is a decorated rack holding half a dozen books, but these are pointless—not only because anyone using this desk would need an impossibly long reach, but because all the volumes are faced away from the writer, with their backs and titles to the open room. Two tall electrified candlestick-lamps (the wire drags awkwardly) stand sentinel over two smaller candlesticks; there is a single letter, already stamped; otherwise the desk is clear, except for a pair of nervous, ringed hands fiddling with a bit of paper.

The hands belong to a young woman got up, to our eyes, as theatrically as some fanciful notion of royalty: she is plainly a lady of fashion, with a constricted waist and a constricting tall collar; her dress is of the whitest fabric, all eyeleted, embroidered, sashed; her hair is elaborately rolled and ringleted; an earring makes a white dot below the high dark eave of her hair; her back is straight, even as she leans forward with concentrated mouth and lost eyes, in the manner of a writer in trance. Mellifluous folds hide her feet; a lady has no legs. She is sitting on a graceful chair, with whorled feet—rattan framed by the most beautiful carved and burnished wood. (A rattan chair with not a single hole? No one could ever have *worked* in such a chair; the photographer defrauds us—nothing more important than a letter will ever be written at this desk.) The Oriental carpet, with its curious and dense figures, is most explicitly in focus, and over the edge of it a tail of skirt spills, reflected white on a floor as sleek as polished glass. In the background, blurred to the camera's lens but instructive to ours: a broad-shouldered velvet chair, a marble bust on an ebony pedestal, a table with a huge porcelain sculpture, a lofty shut oak or walnut door—in short, an "interior," reminding us that the woman at the unused desk has undertaken, as her first writing venture, a collaborative work called *The Decoration of Houses.*

There are other portraits in this vein, formal, posed, poised, "intellectual" (meaning the subject muses over a seeming letter or book), all jeweled clips and chokers and pearls in heavy rows, pendants, feathered hats, lapdogs, furs, statuesque burdens of flounced bosom and grand liquescent sleeve, queenly beyond our bourgeois imaginings.

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And the portraits of houses: multiple chimneys, balconies, cupolas, soaring Romanesque windows, immense stone staircases, summer awnings of palatial breadth, shaped ivy, topiary like oversized chess pieces, walks, vistas, clouds of flower beds.

What are we (putting aside Marxist thoughts) to make of this avalanche of privilege? It is not enough to say: money. The class she derived from never talked of money; the money was invisible, like the writing in bed, and just as secret, and just as indispensable. The "love of beauty," being part of class-habit, does not explain it; perhaps the class-habit does. It was the class-habit that kept her on the move, the class-habit that is restlessness and drift. She wore out houses and places, or else her spirit wore out in them: New York, Newport, Lenox—finally America. In France there was the Paris apartment in the Rue de Varenne, then a small estate in St. Brice-sous-Forêt, in the country north of Paris, then an old chateau in Hyères, on the warm Mediterranean coast. Three times in her life she supervised the total renovation of a colossal mansion and its grounds, in effect building and furnishing and landscaping from scratch; and once, in Lenox, she bought a piece of empty land and really did start from scratch, raising out of the earth an American palace called The Mount. All of this exacted from her the energy, attentiveness, and insatiable governing impulses of a corporation chief executive, or the head of a small state.

In an architectural lull, she would travel. All her life she traveled compulsively, early in her marriage with her husband, touring Europe from February to June, afterward with various male companions, with the sense, and with the propriety, of leading a retinue. Accumulating "scenes"—hotels, landscapes, seascapes, museums, villages, ruins—she saw all the fabled cities of Europe, the islands of the Aegean, Tunis, Algiers, Carthage, the Sahara.

And all the while she was surrounded by a crowd. Not simply while traveling: the crowd was part of the daily condition of her houses and possessions. She had a household staff consisting of maids ("housemaids" and "chambermaids"—there appears to be a difference), a chief gardener and several under-gardeners, cook, housekeeper, major-domo, chauffeur, personal maid, "traveling" maid, secretary, "general agent," footmen. (One of the latter, accompanying her to I Tatti, the Berenson villa in Italy, inconveniently fell in love with a Berenson maid, and had to be surrendered.) These "establishments," Lewis remarks, "gave her what her bountiful nature desired: an ordered life, a carefully tended beauty of surroundings, and above all, total privacy." The "above all" engenders skepticism. Privacy? Surveying that mob of servants, even imagining them crossing silent carpets on tiptoe, one takes the impression, inevitably, of a hive. Her solitude was the congested solitude of a monarch; she was never, like other solitary-minded American writers (one thinks of Poe, or of course Emily Dickinson, or even Scott Fitzgerald), completely alone in the house. But these hectic movements of the hive were what she required; perhaps she would not have known how to do without them. Chekhov could sit at a table in the middle of the din of a large impoverished family, ignoring voices and footsteps in order to concentrate on the scratch of his pen. Edith Wharton sat up in bed with her writing board, in the middle of the active business of a house claiming her attention, similarly shutting out the only family she had. A hired family, an invented one. When she learned that her older brother Freddy, living not far away in Paris, had suffered a stroke, she was "unresponsive"; but when Gross, her housekeeper of long standing, and Elise, her personal maid, both grew fatally ill within a short space, she wrote in her diary, "All my life goes with those two dying women."

Nicky Mariano, in her memoir of her life as secretary-companion to Berenson, recalls how Edith Wharton treated her with indifference—until one day, aboard a yacht near Naples, she happened to ask after Elise. She was at once dispatched to the cabin below to visit with the maid. "From then on I became aware of a complete change in Edith's manner to me. There was a warmth, a tone of intimacy I had never heard before." And again, describing how Wharton "looked after her servants with affectionate zeal and took a lively interest in all their joys and sorrows," she produces another anecdote:

> I remember how once during one of our excursions with her, she was deeply hurt and angry when on leaving a villa near Siena after a prolonged visit she discovered that neither her maid nor her chauffeur had been asked into the house.

WHAT is the effect on a writer of being always encircled by servants? What we are to draw from this is not so much the sadness of purchased affections, or even the parasitism (once, left without much help for a brief period, she was bewildered about her daily survival), but something more perplexing: the moment-by-moment influence of continuous lower-class companionship. Room ought to be given to considering this; it took room in Wharton's life: she was with her servants all the time, she was with her friends and peers only some of the time. E. M. Forster sought out the common people in the belief that too much education atrophies the senses; in life and in art he went after the lower orders because he thought them the embodiment of the spontaneous gods of nature. In theory, at least—perhaps it was only literary theory—Forster wanted to become "instinctual," and instinct was with the working class. But Edith Wharton kept her distance even as she drew close; she remained mistress always. It made her a kind of double exile. As an expatriate settled in France, she had

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cut herself off from any direct infusion of the American sensibility and the American language. Through her attachment to her servants, she became intimately bound to illiterate lives remote from her mentality, preoccupations, habitual perceptions—a second expatriation as deliberate as the more obvious one. Nor did her servants give her access to "ordinary" life (she was no Lady Chatterley, there was no gamekeeper for her)—no one is "ordinary" while standing before the monarch of the house. Still, she fussed over her army of hirelings; it was a way of inventing claims. For her servants she provided pensions; she instituted a trust fund as a private charity for three Belgian children; she sent regular checks to her sister-in-law, divorced from her brother a quarter of a century and therefore clearly not to be taken for family. For family, in short, she substituted claims indisputably of her own making. She could feel responsible for servants and acquired dependents as others feel responsible for parents, brothers, children: but there was a tether made of money, and the power-end of the tether was altogether in her hand. With servants, there is no murkiness—as there sometimes is in friendship—about who is beholden to whom.

With her friends it was more difficult to invent claims; friendship has a way of resisting purchase, and she had to resort to ruses. When she wanted to release Morton Fullerton from the entangling blackmail of his former French mistress, she arranged with Henry James to make it seem as if the money were coming impersonally from a publisher. Fullerton having been, however briefly, her lover, it was hardly possible to hand over one hundred pounds and call it a "pension"; the object was not so much to keep Fullerton's friendship free as to establish the illusion of such freedom. It was enough for the controlling end of the money-tether to know the tether was there; and anyhow the tether had a witness and an accomplice. "Please consider," James wrote, entering into the plot, "that I will play my mechanical part in your magnificent combination with absolute piety, fidelity, and punctuality."

But when it was James himself who came to be on the receiving end of the golden tether, he thundered against the tug of opulence, and the friendship was for a while impaired. The occasion was a proposal for his seventieth birthday: Edith Wharton, enlisting about forty moneyed Americans, thought to raise "not less than $5,000," the idea being "that he should choose a fine piece of old furniture, or something of the kind"—but to James it all smelled blatantly of charity, meddling, pity, and cash. Once he got wind of the plan he called it a "reckless and indiscreet undertaking," and announced in a cable that he was beginning "instant prohibitive action. Please express to individuals approached my horror. Money absolutely returned."

It was returned, but within a few months James was hooked anyhow on that same line—hooked like Morton Fullerton, without being aware of it. This time the accomplice was Charles Scribner, who forwarded to James a phony "advance" of eight thousand dollars intended to see him through the writing of *The Ivory Tower*—but the money was taken out of Wharton's own advance, from another publisher, of fifteen thousand dollars. The reluctant agent of the scheme, far from celebrating "your magnificent combination," saw it rather as "our fell purpose." "I feel rather mean and caddish and must continue so to the end of my days," Charles Scribner grumbled. "Please never give me away." In part this sullenness may have been guilt for not having himself volunteered, as James's publisher, to keep a master artist free from money-anxiety, but beyond that there was a distaste for manipulation and ruse.

This moral confusion about proprieties—whom it is proper to tip, and whom not—expressed itself in other strange substitutions. It was not only that she wanted to pay her lover and her friend for services rendered, sexual or literary—clearly she had little overt recognition of the *quid pro quo* uses of philanthropy. It was not only that she loved her maid Gross more than her mother, and Arthur White her "man" more than her brother—it is understood that voluntary entanglements are not really entanglements at all. But there were more conspicuous replacements. Lacking babies, she habitually fondled small dogs: there is an absurd photograph of Edith Wharton as a young woman of twenty-eight, by then five years into her marriage, with an angry-looking Pekingese on each muttonleg shoulder; the animals, pressed against her cheeks, nearly obscure her face; the face is cautious and contemplative, as of one not wanting to jar precious things. A similar photograph shows her husband gazing straight out at us with rather empty pale eyes over a nicely-trimmed mustache and a perfect bow tie—on his lap, with no special repugnance, he is holding three small dogs, two of them of that same truculent breed, and though the caption reads "Teddy Wharton with his dogs," somehow we know better whose dogs they are. His body is detached, his expression, very correct and patient, barely hides—though Lewis argues otherwise—how he is being put upon by such a pose.

UNTIL LATE in life, she never knew a child. Effie, the little girl in *The Reef*, is a child observed from afar—she runs, she enters, she departs, she is sent, she is summoned, at one moment she is presented as very young, at another she is old enough to be having lessons in Latin. She is a figment of a child. But the little dogs, up to the end of Edith Wharton's life, were always understood, always thought to have souls, always in her arms and in her bed; they were, Lewis says, "among the main joys of her being." Drawing up a list of her "ruling passions" at for-

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ty-two, she put "Dogs" second after "Justice and Order." At sixty-two she wrote in her journal of "the *us*ness" in the eyes of animals, "with the underlying *not-us*ness which belies it," and meditated on their "eternal inarticulateness and slavery. Why? their eyes seem to ask us."

The fellow feeling she had for the *not-us*ness of her Pekingese she did not have for her husband, who was, from her point of view, also *"not-us."* He too was inarticulate and mired in the slavery of a lesser intellect. He was a good enough man, interested (like his wife) in being perfectly clothed, vigorous and humorous and kind and compliant (so compliant that he once actually tried to make his way through James's *The Golden Bowl*)—undistinguished in any jot, the absolute product of his class. He had no work to do, and sought none. One of Edith Wharton's friends—a phrase instantly revealing, since her friends were practically never his; the large-hearted Henry James was nearly the only one to cross this divide—observed that Teddy Wharton's "idleness was busy and innocent." His ostensible employment was the management of his wife's trust funds, but he filled his days with sports and hunting, and his glass with fine wine. Wine was the one thing he had a connoisseur's familiarity with; and, of all the elegant good things of the world, wine was the one thing his wife disliked. When he was fifty-three he began to go mad, chiefly, it would seem, because he had married the wrong wife, with no inkling that she would turn out to be the wrong wife. Edith Newbold Jones at twenty-three was exactly what Edward Wharton, a dozen years older, had a right to expect for himself: she had heritage (her ancestor, Ebenezer Stevens, was an enterprising artillery officer in the Revolutionary War), she had inheritance (the Joneses owned the Chemical Bank of New York and much of the West Side). In brief, family and money. The dominant quality—what he had married her for, with that same idle innocence that took note only of the pleasantly obvious—was what Edith Wharton was afterward to call "tribe." The Whartons and the Joneses were of the same tribe—old Protestant money—and he could hardly predict that his wife would soon replace him in the nuptial bed with a writing board. At first he was perplexed but proud: Louis Auchincloss quotes a description of Teddy Wharton from Consuelo Vanderbilt's memoirs as "more of an equerry than an equal, walking behind [his wife] and carrying whatever paraphernalia she happened to discard," and once (Lewis tells us), walking as usual behind her, Teddy exclaimed to one of her friends, "Look at that waist! No one would ever guess that she had written a line of poetry in her life." She, meanwhile, was driven to writing in her journal, "Oh, Gods of derision! And you've given me over twenty years of it!" This outcry occurred immediately after having shown her husband, during a wearying train journey, "a particularly interesting passage" in a scientific volume called *Heredity and Variation*. His response was not animated. "I heard the key turn in my prison-lock," she recorded, in the clear metaphorical style of her fiction.

A case can be made that it was she who turned the key on him. His encroaching madness altered him—he began to act oddly, out of character; or, rather, more in character than he had ever before dared. The equerry of the paraphernalia undertook to behave as if he were master of the paraphernalia—in short, he embezzled a part of the funds it had been his duty to preserve and augment. And, having been replaced in bed by a writing board, he suddenly confessed to his wife (or perhaps feverishly bragged) that he had recently gone to live with a prostitute in a Boston apartment, filling its remaining rooms with chorus girls; the embezzled funds paid for the apartment. The story was in the main confirmed. His madness had the crucial sanity of needs that are met.

His wife, who—granted that philanthropy is not embezzlement—was herself capable of moneyruse, and who had herself once rapturously fallen from merely spiritual friendship, locked him up for it. Against his protestations, and that of his sister and brother, he was sent to a sanitorium. Teddy had stolen, Teddy had fallen; he was an adulterer. She had never stolen (though there is a robust if mistaken critical tradition that insists she stole her whole literary outlook from Henry James); but she had fallen, she was an adulteress. Teddy's sexual disgrace was public; hers went undivulged until her biographer came upon it more than three decades after her death. But these sardonic parallels and opposites illumine little beyond the usual ironies of the pot and the kettle. What had all at once happened in Edith Wharton's life was that something *had* happened. Necessity intervened, her husband was irrefutably a manic-depressive. He had hours of excitement and accusation; more often he was in a state of self-castigation. He begged her for help, he begged to be taken back and to be given a second chance. ". . . When you came back last year," she told him, "I was ready to overlook everything you had done, and to receive you as if nothing had happened." This referred to the Boston apartment; she herself had been in a London hotel with Fullerton at nearly the same time. In the matter of her money she was more unyielding. Replying to his plea to be allowed to resume the management of her trusts and property, she took the tone of a mistress with a servant who has been let go, and who is now discovered still unaccountably loitering in the house. "In order that no further questions of this kind should come up, the only thing left for me to do is to suggest that you should resign your Trusteeship. . . . Your health unfortunately makes it impossible for you to take any active part in the management of my affairs." Gradually, over months, she evolved a policy: she did everything

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for him that seemed sensible, as long as it was cold-hearted. He was removed, still uncured, from the sanitorium, and subjected to a regime of doctors, trips, traveling companions, scoldings. In the end, when he was most sick and most desperate, she discarded him, handing him over to the doctors the way one hands over impeding paraphernalia to an equerry. She discarded him well before she divorced him; divorce, at that period and in her caste, took deliberation. She discarded him because he impeded, he distracted, he was a nuisance, he drained her, he wore her out. As a woman she was contemptuous of him, as a writer she fought off his interruptions. The doctors were more polite than Henry James, who characterized Teddy Wharton as able to "hold or follow no counter-proposal, no plan of opposition, of his own, for as much as a minute or two; he is immediately *off*—irrelevant and childish . . . one's pity for her is at the best scarce bearable."

She too pitied herself, and justly, though she forgot to pity *him*. He had lost all trust in himself, whatever he said he timidly or ingratiatingly or furiously took back. He was flailing vainly after the last flashes of an autonomy his wife had long ago stripped from him. And during all that angry space, when she was bitterly engaged in fending off the partisan ragings of his family, and coldly supervising his medical and traveling routines, she, in the stern autonomy of her morning bed, was writing *Ethan Frome*, finishing *The Reef*, bringing off short stories. She could do all this because she did not look into her husband's eyes and read there, as she had read in the eyes of her little dogs, the helpless pathos of "Why?" It was true that she did not and could not love him, but her virtue was always according to principle, not passion. Presumably she also did not love the French soldiers who were sick with tuberculosis contracted in the trenches of World War I; nevertheless for them she organized a cure program, which she termed "the most vital thing that can be done in France now." Whatever the most vital thing for Teddy might have been—perhaps there was nothing—she relinquished it at last. The question of the tubercular soldiers was, like all the claims on her spirit which she herself initiated, volitional and opportune. She had sought out these tragedies, they were not implicated in the conditions of her own life, that peculiar bed she had made for herself—"such a great big uncompromising 4-poster," James called it. For the relief of tubercular soldiers and other good works, she earned a French medal, and was made a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor. An arena of dazzling public exertion. But in the lesser frame of private mess she did nothing to spare her husband the humiliation of his madness. It is one thing to go mad, it is another to be humiliated for it. The one time in her life drift stopped dead in its trackless spume, and a genuine claim made as if to seize her—necessity, redder in tooth and claw than any sacrifice one grandly chooses for oneself—she turned away. For her, such a claim was the Gorgon's head, to gaze on which was death.

Writer's death. This is something most writers not only fear but sweat to evade, though most do not practice excision with as clean a knife-edge as cut away "irrelevant and childish" Teddy from Edith Wharton's life. "Friend, client, child, sickness, fear, want, charity, all knock at once at thy closet door and say—'Come out unto us.' But keep thy state," Emerson advised, "come not into their confusion." And Mann's Tonio Kröger declaims that "one must die to life to be utterly a creator." This ruthless romantic idea—it cannot be lived up to by weaklings who succumb to conscience, let alone to love—is probably at bottom less romantic than pragmatic. But it is an idea very nearly the opposite of Wilson's and Kazin's more affecting view of Edith Wharton: that joylessness was her muse, that her troubles energized her for fiction—the stimulus of "some exceptional emotional strain," according to Wilson, "so many maladjustments," according to Kazin, which made the novelist possible. If anything made the novelist possible, it was the sloughing off of the sources of emotional strain and personal maladjustment. As for the parallel new-feminist opinion that a woman writes best when she risks "unbearable wisdoms," it does not apply: what wisdom Edith Wharton found unbearable she chose not to bear.

The rest was chatter. Having turned away from the Gorgon's head, she spent the remainder of her life—indeed, nearly the whole of it—in the mainly insipid, sometimes inspired, adventure of elevated conversation. She had her friends. There were a few women—whether because she did not encounter her equals among women, or because she avoided them, her biographer yields no hint. The majority were men (one should perhaps say "gentlemen")—Lapsley, Lubbock, Berenson, Fullerton, Simmons, James, Bourget, D'Humières, Berry, Sturgis, Hugh-Smith, Maynard, Gregory, Grant, Scott . . . the list is longer still. Lewis fleshes out all these names brilliantly, particularly Berry and Fullerton; the great comic miraculous James needs no fleshing out. James was in a way afraid of her. She swooped down on him to pluck him away for conversation or sightseeing, and he matched the "commotion and exhaustion" of her arrivals against the vengeance of Bonaparte, Attila, and Tamerlaine. "Her powers of devastation are ineffable," he reported, and got into the habit of calling her the Angel of Devastation. She interrupted his work with the abruptness of a natural force (she might occur at any time) and at her convenience (she had particular hours for her work, he had all hours for his). He read her novels and dispatched wondrous celebrating smokescreens of letters ("I applaud, I mean I value, I egg you on") to hide the insufficiency of his admiration. As for her "life," it was a spectacle that had from the be-

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ginning upset him: her "desolating, ravaging, burning, and destroying energy." And again: "Such a nightmare of perpetually renewable choice and decision, such a luxury of bloated alternatives." "*What* an incoherent life!" he summed it up. Lewis disagrees, and reproaches James for partial views and a probable fear of strong women; but it may be, on all the lavish evidence Lewis provides, that the last word will after all lie with drift, exactly as James perceived it in her rushing aimlessness aimed at him.

BEFORE Lewis's landmark discovery of the Wharton-Fullerton liaison, Walter Van Rensselaer Berry—Wharton's distant cousin, an international lawyer and an aristocrat—was commonly regarded as the tender center and great attachment of her life. Lewis does not refute this connection, though he convincingly drains it of sexual particularity, and gives us the portrait of a conventionally self-contained dry-hearted lifelong bachelor, a man caught, if not in recognizable drift, then in another sort of inconclusiveness. But Walter Berry was Edith Wharton's first literary intellectual—a lightning-bolt of revelation that, having struck early, never lost its electrical sting. Clearly, she fed on intellectuals—but in a withdrawn and secretive way: she rarely read her work aloud, though she rejoiced to hear James read his. She brooded over history and philosophy, understood everything, but was incapable in fiction or elsewhere of expressing anything but the most commonplace psychology. This was, of course, her strength: she knew how human beings behave, she could describe and predict and surprise. Beyond that, she had a fertile capacity for thinking up stories. Plots and permutations of plots teemed. She was scornful of writers who agonized after subject matter. Subjects, she said, swarmed about her "like mosquitoes," until she felt stifled by their multiplicity and variety.

The truth is she had only one subject, the 19th century's unique European literary subject: society. Standard American criticism, struggling to "place" Edith Wharton in a literary environment unused to her subject, has contrived for her the role of a lesser Henry James. This has served to indict her as an imitative figure. But on no significant level is the comparison with James pertinent, except to say that by and large they wrote about the same kinds of people, derived from the same class. Otherwise the difference can be seized in a breath: James was a genius, Wharton not. James invented an almost metaphysical art. Wharton's insights lay close against their molds: what she saw she judged. James became an American in the most ideal sense, Wharton remained an estranged New Yorker. James was an uncanny moralist, Wharton a canny realist. James scarcely ever failed—or, at least, his few failures when they occurred were nevertheless glorious in aspiration and seamless in execution. When Wharton failed, she fell into an embarrassing triteness of language and seeing.

It is a pity that her name is attached so unrelentingly—thanks to the American high school—to *Ethan Frome*, a desolate, even morbid, narrow, soft-at-the-center and at the last unsurprising novella not at all typical of her range. It is an outdoor book that ends mercilessly indoors; she was an indoor novelist. She achieved two permanent novels, one—*The House of Mirth*—a spoiled masterpiece, a kind of latter-day reverse *Scarlet Letter*, very direct yet eerie, the other *The Age of Innocence*, a combination of ode and elegy to the New York of her childhood, affirmation and repudiation both. A good many of her short stories and some of the novellas ("The Old Maid," for instance) are marvels of shapeliness and pointedness. This applies also to stories written during her late period, when she is widely considered to have debased her gift. The common accusation—Wilson makes it—is that her prose finally came to resemble women's magazine fiction. One can venture that she did not so much begin to sound like the women's magazines, as that they began to sound like her, a condition that obtains until this moment. No one has explored Wharton's ongoing subliminal influence on current popular fiction (see almost any issue of *Redbook);* such an investigation would probably be striking in its disclosure of the strength of her legacy. Like any hokey imitation long after the model is lost to consciousness, it is not a bad compliment, though it may be awkward to admit it. (One of the least likely tributes to the Roman Empire, after all, is the pervasiveness of 19th-century American civic architecture.) But *The House of Mirth* and *The Age of Innocence* are, like everything unsurpassable because deeply idiosyncratic, incapable of spawning versions of themselves; in these two novels she is in command of an inwardness commensurate with structure. In them she does not simply grab hold of society, or judge it merely; she turns society into an exulting bird of prey, with blood on its beak, steadily beating its wings just over our heads; she turns society into an untamable *idea*. The reader, apprehensive, yet lured by the bird's lyric form, covers his face.

SHE COULD do all that; she had that power. Lewis, writing to justify and defend, always her sympathetic partisan, nevertheless hedges. Having acknowledged that she had "begun to locate herself—with a certain assurance, though without vanity—in the developing course of American literature," he appends a doubt:

> But in another part of her, there remained something of the conviction drilled into her in old New York that it was improper for a lady to write fiction. One could do so only if one joked about it—if one treated it, to borrow Lubbock's word, as "an amusement." She sometimes sounded as if her writing were her entertainingly guilty secret, and in her memoirs she

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> referred to it (borrowing the title of a popular children's book of her own New York youth) as her "secret garden."
>
> But in the winter of 1911 [she was then at work on *The Reef*], as on perhaps half a dozen other occasions, it was the believing artist that was in ascendancy during the hard-driving morning hours.

Somehow it is easy to doubt that she had this doubt—or, if she once had it, that she held it for long. To believe in her doubt is to make the bad case of the orthodox critics who, unlike Lewis, have shrunk from taking her seriously as an artist because as an American aristocrat she was born shockingly appurtenanced, and therefore deserves to be patronized for her sorrows. To believe in her doubt is to make the bad case of the new feminists, for whom female sex is, always and everywhere, an impediment difficult to transcend—even when, for an obsessed writer of talent, there is nothing to transcend. To believe in her doubt is to reverse the terms of her life and her work. Only "half a dozen other occasions" when Wharton was a "believing artist"? Only so few? This would mean that the life outside her bed—the dressed life of conversation and travel, the matchstick life of drift—was the primary life, and the life with her writing board—the life of the believing artist—the deviation, the anomaly, the distraction.

But we know, and have always known (Freud taught us only how to reinforce this knowledge), that the secret self is the true self, that obsession is confession. For Edith Wharton that is the only acceptable evaluation, the only possible justice. She did not doubt her allegiance. The writing came first. That she kept it separate from the rest was a misrepresentation and a mistake, but it may also have been a species of holy instinct—it was the one uncontaminated zone of her being: the place unprofaned. Otherwise she can be defined only by the horrific gyrations of "a life"—by the spiraling solipsism and tragic drift that led her to small dogs instead of babies, servants instead of family, high-minded male distance instead of connubial friendship, public virtue instead of private conscience, infatuation instead of the love that sticks. Only the writing board could justify these ugly substitutions. And some would say—myself not among them—that not even the writing board justified them.

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Our Latin American Hairshirt

Mark Falcoff

FOR A PEOPLE whose greatest need is to be loved, a British journalist once observed, of all the places on earth, Americans must be unhappiest in Latin America. At the time the comment seemed both witty and apposite; today one wonders whether the same author might not console us with the thought that if Latin Americans do not love us, at any rate, they cannot dislike us any more than we already dislike ourselves. In some ways there is nothing new about this state of affairs. Self-doubt is not precisely a virgin sentiment in this country, and Latin hostility to the United States, as everyone knows, boasts an extremely venerable pedigree. What is new, however, is the peculiar fusion of these attitudes into one forming a baroque guilt syndrome, in which this country stands condemned not only for its own shortcomings but also for virtually all of the failures of its southern neighbors. Where once Americans were content to dismiss Latin America's sufferings as the just price to be paid for Roman Catholicism, Spanish colonization, chili peppers, Montezuma's revenge, and *machismo*, today they seem perilously close to accepting responsibility for the Latin American share in Original Sin. In fact, things have come to such a pass that an extraordinary number of otherwise intelligent people now believe that events in Latin America are determined in the United States to such a point that they can be understood only in terms of decisions made in Washington, New York, and the Pentagon.

It is not difficult to trace the origins of this development. Apart from the obviously seminal experience of Vietnam, Americans have been regaled for years now with vulgarized accounts of the revelations arising out of the overthrow of President Salvador Allende of Chile, the disputed confessions of a former CIA agent now resident in England, the spectacular (if sometimes inconclusive) probes of various congressional committees examining the activities of U.S. intelligence agencies overseas. If things continue along the same lines in the future, it will eventually seem reasonable to ask whether "Latin America" itself really exists at all, or whether it survives as a kind of picturesque extension of the U.S. Department of State, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the United Fruit Company.

The issue, however, is not whether the hairshirt fits us—for clearly, we luxuriate in its exquisite discomfort—but whether indeed it is the appropriate garment for us to wear. Posing the problem somewhat more conventionally, do we need to accept the ultimate responsibility for everything that happens in Latin America? To what degree does the United States in fact control the politics, the military affairs, the economic development, and the cultural life of the southern republics? To questions of this magnitude there can be no easy answer, in fact no single answer at all. What one can do with reasonable assurance, however, is to establish that in our relationship with Latin America two distinct parties are involved. One can show as well, with little difficulty, that the current demonology utterly ignores a Latin America rich in its own contradictions and conflicts, free of pejorative quotation marks and fully able to assume the historic responsibility for its own existence.

PERHAPS the most widespread single misconception about Latin America now abroad in this country is the belief that, because the extremes of wealth and poverty there are vastly greater than in much of Europe and the United States, a "revolutionary" situation permanently obtains. From this notion it is deduced, with equal measure of error, that were it not for the intervention, direct or indirect, of the United States, socialist or at least "popular" governments would be in power in most or all of the Latin American states. Those who believe this ignore the sage observation of Leon Trotsky that if poverty alone were the sufficient precondition of revolution, most of the earth's societies would be in revolt most of the time. More to the point, they overlook the unpleasant fact that in Latin America there are bound to be as large a proportion of conservatives among the general population as anywhere else. In fact, considering the sociological and cultural facts of life, there are probably more

MARK FALCOFF teaches Latin American history at the University of Oregon and is co-editor (with Ronald H. Dolkart) of *Prologue to Perón: Argentina in Depression and War, 1930–1943* (California). Mr. Falcoff contributed "Why Allende Fell" to our July issue.

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of them—and not all landed oligarchs, either. No doubt to some it is tempting to attribute the collapse of "popular" regimes such as that of General Juan José Torres in Bolivia or President João Goulart in Brazil to the machinations of U.S. agents. But the truth is that these governments fell because they alienated significant sectors of the politically active population who needed no prompting from outsiders to defend themselves against challenges to their basic interests.

In any case, the logic which "explains" the downfall of some regimes in terms of U.S. intervention fails to account for the survival of others, many of which Washington has found equally obnoxious. The example of Chile is fresh in all minds, but who today remembers how vigorously the United States opposed the election of Juan Perón to the presidency of Argentina in 1946? Ambassador Spruille Braden, one of our ablest Latin American diplomats and one of the very few fully fluent in Spanish, toured that country in late 1945 speaking on behalf of Perón's opponent, and on the eve of the elections the State Department issued its now-famous "Blue Book" purporting to establish that the young colonel had worked in collusion with the defeated powers of Axis Europe. Unfortunately, the Argentine electorate proved inattentive to American cues; faced with the alternative, "Braden or Perón," they elected the latter by an overwhelming majority. Likewise, eight years later, when Perón had made his peace with Washington and the U.S. business community, neither lifted a finger to save his regime when it began its precipitous decline.

The case of Perón is doubly illustrative, for it demonstrates not only the frequent inability of the United States to prevent the emergence of unfriendly regimes in Latin America, but also its apparent incapacity to save its beleaguered friends. When Franklin D. Roosevelt declared of a certain Caribbean dictator, "Well, he may be a sonofabitch, but he's *our* sonofabitch," he was not boasting of the extent of American power but soberly recognizing its uncomfortable limitations. From his own unsuccessful experiences in Haiti and Cuba he knew whereof he spoke. In point of fact not one but two Cuban revolutions resulting in governments unwelcome to the United States—that of 1933 and that of 1959—could have been prevented if only Washington could have convinced its "friends," dictators Gerardo Machado (1924-33) and Fulgencio Batista (1952-59), to step down in favor of conciliatory caretaker governments. Nor, be it noted, was the failure to extract this concession from either due to lack of strenuous effort.

STILL another side of this problem is demonstrated by the fate of the liberal-Tory government of Fernando Belaúnde Terry in Peru (1963-68). Although high on the preferential list of the Alliance for Progress, Belaúnde was quickly shorn of power by leftist military officers early one morning in 1968, and bundled off to the United States where he spent several years teaching architecture. "I never expropriated anything," the former Peruvian chief executive declared to me with some bitterness not long ago, "and yet I had to deal with the arrogance of the American oil companies and the unremitting hostility of the United States Embassy. My successors have nationalized American oil interests left and right, and Washington can't seem to do enough for them. How do you explain that?" How indeed? Not, at any rate, by Wall Street conspiracy theories.

Finally, those who see in Washington the supreme puppeteer who pulls virtually all of the political strings in Latin America utterly ignore the generations of dictators who have learned how to manipulate the United States government on the petard-point of its own fears and prejudices. Even before the days of the "red scare," many a tropical tyrant had mastered the art of conjuring up the specter of British, German, even Japanese imperialism, in order to get Washington to do its bidding. When all else failed, they could sternly warn a credulous State Department that the only alternative to their regime was "chaos," and get their way. In fact, many still do.

Of course, the advent of the cold war was a positive windfall for such governments, who have used a fear of Communism to extract every manner of aid, when the most conventional common sense would have advised otherwise. Even Haiti's François ("Papa Doc") Duvalier was not above this tactic; when beset with pressures in the early 60's to liberalize his voodoo dictatorship, he threatened (incredibly) to turn to Communism, and the Kennedy administration was promptly brought to heel. Perhaps the Haitian leader was merely borrowing a page from the book of his long-term neighbor in the Dominican Republic, Generalíssimo Rafael Trujillo, who eventually raised the technique of the red herring to a high art form. As Ambassador John Bartlow Martin recalls in his excellent book on that country, whenever Trujillo wanted to bait the United States, he would call home from exile a certain Communist by the name of Máximo López Molina. "Once," Martin writes, "he even gave López Molina control of a radio station. Then, when Trujillo tired of him, or no longer needed him [to demonstrate to the United States the imminent threat of a Communist takeover in the Dominican Republic], the police would 'discover' López Molina's 'secret headquarters,' smash it, and throw him in jail—then release him when Trujillo needed him next." This *opéra bouffe*, Martin thinks, occurred thirteen different times.

During the early 60's a few Latin American leaders perfected an even more complicated technique—while manipulating Washington through

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its fear of native Communist movements, they simultaneously posed as champions of national independence at home by flirting diplomatically with the (then strictly forbidden) Communist world. Although Argentine President Arturo Frondizi (1958-62) dabbled in this, the most advanced practitioners were Brazilian presidents Jânio Quadros (1961) and João Goulart (1961-64). The latter finally stumbled and fell victim to a military coup in 1964. But the cause was not, as some would have us believe, his intention to recognize Red China or his refusal to subscribe to Washington's financial orthodoxies; it was a complex web of domestic factors in which Goulart's political appeals to enlisted men in the Brazilian army over the heads of their officers figured very prominently.

THIS BRINGS us to another myth nearly as widespread—the notion that the United States prefers military to civilian governments in Latin America because, presumably, the officer class is more conservative politically, more congenial to our economic interests, and more attentive to the overtures of our overseas representatives. This image is extremely difficult to dispel, in spite of growing evidence to the contrary, partly because some regimes superficially answer to this description, and because of a rich store of fictional archetypes (Graham Greene novels, Hollywood films, radical-chic journalism) which reinforce it. Nonetheless, the fact remains that there is no single military ideology in Latin America—that the service communities are as diverse and divided as their civilian counterparts, and that the United States has as much reason to prefer civilian regimes as to distrust them.

The problem of "militarism" in Latin America is a very hoary one indeed, but its meaning has varied widely over the last hundred and fifty years. During the first generation after independence, in many of the republics the only viable political "party" was the army, and the victorious insurgent generals became, by default, a new class of *presidenciables*. Except for the advancement of their corporate, personal, or family interest, it is difficult to find in most of these figures anything approaching an authentic "ideology." By the end of the 19th century, however, much progress had been made toward "professionalization" of the army, particularly among the Latin American "majors"—Chile, Argentina, Brazil, and (to 1910) Mexico, and in these countries and several others civilian leadership seemed well on its way to asserting its primacy.

Partisans of professionalization hoped that the prevailing ideology of the military would ultimately become "republican," that is, respectful of civilian supremacy, of constitutional procedures, and (at least by implication) of the socioeconomic status quo. Unfortunately for them, the first generation or so of professionally trained officers came on stream just about the time when the urban middle classes—from which most of them were recruited in the first place—were beginning to discover a political idiom of their own. The winds of populism, nationalism, and anti-imperialism, which wafted through many of the republics in the decade after 1914, carried along not only lawyers, schoolteachers, and journalists, but young officers as well. By the 30's, in addition to the republican ethos which was most prevalent among the older generation, one could find at least two military ideologies.

One, which for lack of a better name we shall call "nationalist," came (and still comes) in either a left- or right-wing version. In the former, it emphasized the evils of imperialism and the need for radical social reform at home, and thus shaded imperceptibly into Marxist socialism. The latter placed the blame for national ills on a selfish plutocracy (frequently accused of being in league with foreign interests) and decadent parliamentary institutions, thus borrowing two themes common to European fascism.

The other ideology was "regenerationist" in the sense that it held that national institutions could only be revitalized by the military—"the last aristocracy," as Argentine poet Leopoldo Lugones called it in a famous speech in 1924. Regenerationist officers believed that civilian politicians had proven themselves too corrupt and too undisciplined, above all too lacking in idealism, to accomplish great national goals. In this light, military governments were necessary in order to realize civilian objectives (industrialization, for example) which civilians themselves were unwilling (or unable) to achieve.

Obviously, these ideological currents were not (and are not) mutually exclusive, and in the confused environment of the 20's many a Latin American officer accepted portions of both. The Ibáñez regime in Chile (1927-31) is a case in point, as are the governments of Generals Uriburu (1930-31) and Perón (1946-55) in Argentina. Nor has the "republican" mindset disappeared from Latin American military circles. During the early 60's the most important political conflict in Argentina was taking place not in the halls of parliament but among "red" (regenerationist/right-wing nationalist) and "blue" (republican) officers. The fate of Argentine constitutional democracy was sealed when Lt.-General Juan Carlos Onganiá, the leading "blue" officer, changed colors. (All the while, by the way, U.S. Ambassador Edward Martin was dashing about Buenos Aires vainly trying to save the faltering civilian government of Dr. Arturo Illia.)

The fact that the United States has had to deal with armies in Latin America which spurn the "republican" outlook responds, then, not to our preferences, but to realities over which we have

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had little control. Misunderstandings in this country often arise because deposed Latin American civilians like to claim that their governments fell because of a refusal to "knuckle under" to U.S. pressures; this is a convenient way of excusing failure, but it explains nothing. Coups are rarely staged by officers who want to do "business as usual," the perennial obsession of U.S. embassies. And "activist" generals are at least as inclined to flirt with ideologies potentially threatening to U.S. interests as civilian *caudillos*.

To be sure, most of Latin America's heavy armaments and aircraft are manufactured in the United States, frequently with U.S. government subsidies to facilitate their purchase. A very large proportion of Latin American officers of high rank have been trained either at service schools in this country or at Fort Gulick in the Canal Zone. Much of the methodology of Latin American armies ("doctrine") is congruent to, or identical with, American practice. And our service attachés do possess extensive perquisites to dispense among "cooperative" Latin American officers. These include trips not only to the enormous PX in the Canal Zone, but also study tours of the United States, short courses at the U.S. service schools, and so forth.

BUT INFLUENCE, even influence of this sort, is a double-edged sword. For contact often leads not to "cooperation," much less collusion, but to friction. American officers (with the exception of West Point graduates, a tiny minority of the whole) tend to come from less well-educated and less refined sectors of their society than their Latin American counterparts; though relatively wealthier in their foreign setting, these Americans often appear to their hosts provincial and undignified. They rarely master Spanish or Portuguese, and their efforts to influence their Latin colleagues are frequently abrasive and alienating, in societies that place an extraordinary importance on "form."

Further, Latin American officers have long resented the near-U.S. monopoly on equipment, and there has been much talk in recent years about the need either for the southern republics to manufacture these items themselves (which meshes very well with certain domestic political interests), or to diversify their sources of supply (welcome news to the British and French embassies). During the 60's, an additional irritant was introduced by the fixation (as it then was) in Washington on counter-guerrilla training. American service attachés frequently found it difficult to convince local officers of the need to "go to the field" for this rugged type of training; many preferred (as they always have) to remain in the capital or in the larger cities, where they could enjoy the amenities of the service club, their families, and a mistress discreetly tucked away in a suburban high-rise.

Finally, we need to remember that military ambition in Latin America can assume many forms, only one of which is to curry favor with the U.S. Embassy. Some officers have striven mightily to prove that they are better patriots for having accepted Yanqui favors: Yon Sosa, leader of the Guatemalan guerrilla movement, was trained in the Canal Zone and at Fort Benning while an army lieutenant, and most of the officers of the current left-wing junta in Peru were exposed to some U.S. military education. Indeed, the Peruvian junta has in general done wonders to demonstrate the limits of American military influence in Latin America. Shortly after seizing power it nationalized the holdings of the International Petroleum Company, a subsidiary of Standard Oil. When our service attachés allegedly attempted to stir up resistance to this move, and the United States, by way of retaliation, cancelled scheduled delivery of some military aircraft, the Peruvian government promptly expelled all members of the U.S. military mission and began to explore possibilities with British and French aircraft manufacturers. The United States quickly came around.

Military leaders in other countries as well have discovered that domestic political fortunes can be vastly enhanced by Yankee-baiting; no less a reactionary than Argentine General Jorge Carcagno, who gained his combat decorations suppressing the 1969 uprising of workers and students in Córdoba, lambasted the United States at a meeting of the Inter-American Defense Board in Washington in 1973. (At the time he was being seriously considered as a possible running mate for Perón in the fall elections.) Even the Brazilian generals so much in favor with Secretary Kissinger may have other tricks up their sleeve. One of them recently confessed to a West German journalist that all the foreign investment flocking into Brazil was wonderful. "We hope it keeps coming," he declared, "because . . . there'll be just that much more to nationalize later on."

FOREIGN investment in Latin America means, of course, U.S. investment—largely though not exclusively. Still, there is no disputing that this country is to an overwhelming degree the single most important source of capital and outside economic influence in the southern hemisphere. For many years our principal area of investment was the extraction of raw materials, and American concerns are still heavily involved in mining and agribusiness. But since the 30's there has been a steady increase in national control of subsoil resources, as U.S. corporations have switched over to the elaboration of consumer goods for the local market. Today everything from Ford trucks to Sheaffer fountain pens is manufactured in Latin America, and latterly American interests have branched out into television, motion pictures, and advertising. Even in industries

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which are nationally owned, U.S. influence continues to be great, either through patent royalties or a near-monopoly of technology. For example, although the Chilean goverment has long owned its steel mill near Talcahuano, the maintenance and repairs on the blast furnace and auxiliary equipment continue to be done by teams brought down from this country. And earlier this year the Mexican press was full of complaints that the long-since (1938) nationalized oil industry had yet to emancipate itself from dependence on refinery chemicals and machinery imported from the United States.

American voices are likewise heard in all the areas of credit and monetary policy, perhaps to the near-exclusion of other foreign interests, although not without reference to domestic political pressures and needs. The dollar remains the reserve currency of all Latin American governments except that of Cuba, and many countries depend heavily on aid from multinational lending agencies in which the U.S. has a predominant influence, such as the Inter-American Development Bank or the International Monetary Fund. Private U.S. banks are likewise important as a source of short-term loans or as a means of refinancing national debts.

However, influence, no matter how great, is not control, and even in this area of greatest advantage the United States has had to face serious limits to its power. The nub of the problem is that, as American interests in Latin America become vastly more diversified, it has become increasingly difficult—not to say impossible—for the United States government to arrive at a single economic policy which is agreeable to all of its major constituents. The International Monetary Fund, for example, continues in Latin America to counsel deflationary policies which would be laughed out of court in the industrial countries—balanced budgets, reduced government payrolls, austerity today, tomorrow, and forever. If followed to the letter, the advice of the IMF would seriously jeopardize the *political* interests of the United States in Latin America, which are stability and continuity rather than chaos and upheaval. "Conservative" no less than "popular" governments in Latin America require enormous amounts of patronage in order to secure their power base, and to throw thousands of government workers on the street in the service of financial orthodoxy would win approval, perhaps, from Dr. Arthur Burns, but not, I think, from the political officers in our southern embassies nor from the Department of State. Nor can American manufacturers in Latin America find much comfort in austerity programs; like their counterparts in the United States, they depend upon mass purchasing power and easier credit to turn a profit.

Diversification of American investment and interest in Latin America has likewise created a host of countervailing pressures on the U.S. Congress and on agencies responsible for evolving policies on tariffs and import quotas. In the days when American enterprises south of the border were largely confined to the production of raw materials for resale in the United States or Europe, the only serious conflicts which could ensue were those between the U.S. producer-importer and the U.S. domestic producer, if such existed. Today the matter is vastly more complex. The amount of Brazilian coffee, Peruvian fishmeal, Bolivian wolfram, Venezuelan sugar and petroleum, and so forth, which can enter the United States determines in the most important degree the amount of U.S. manufactured goods (or manufactured goods elaborated *in situ* by Latin American-based U.S. companies) which our neighbors can purchase. If all of this seems a bit complicated, that at least conveys a proper sense of the way in which our economic policies in Latin America evolve—through the influence of *many different interests*, including, needless to say, Latin American governments themselves.

To some, no doubt, Latin America's problem is not monetary policies or import quotas, but the *structural hegemony of the United States* in the international capitalist order. Those who subscribe to this view call themselves dependency theorists, and they constitute a large and growing proportion of the social scientists (especially the sociologists) now writing on Latin American affairs. The underlying assumption of dependency theory, as stated by one of its leading exponents, Andre Gunder Frank, is that there can be no development without underdevelopment; in other words, the world capitalist order and the Third World are one seamless entity, in which the former could not exist without the latter. The implication, drawn by others, is that if American workers are to have automobiles, Bolivian workers must go without shoes. The unspoken assumption of high-church dependency theorists is that if tomorrow the United States ceased to exist, or if it experienced a socialist revolution, the Latin American economic order would quickly become more rational, more developed, and more socially just. In a somewhat attenuated version current among certain kinds of Latin American conservatives, emphasis is placed on the allegedly *low prices* which the United States pays for Latin America's raw materials, which, we are told, explain the difference in our standards of living. If we would fend off a social cataclysm in Latin America, it is often argued, we must immediately redress the balance.

The problem with dependency theory is that it overestimates the *economic* importance of Latin America to the United States. U.S. investment there constitutes only about 5 per cent of our total overseas commitment, most of which is in the safer havens of Canada and Western Europe. True, that

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5 per cent includes some of the more critical strategic raw materials, but in recent years the trend toward nationalization on the one hand and the development of synthetics, substitutes, and alternative sources of supply on the other have deprived this argument of much of its cutting edge. Nor is it the case, as many Latin Americans have claimed, that for every dollar the U.S. invests in the region, it extracts four in return; if this were so, Latin America would be the most profitable field for foreign investment in the world, and would not be—as it often is—perennially short of capital.

The argument that the United States pays unfairly low prices for Latin America's raw materials is compelling on the face of it, but it founders rather badly when one asks the inevitable question—"What is a fair price?" I have heard this question put to the scholarly Costa Rican Ambassador Raúl Silva, and the passionate Roman Catholic Archbishop of Recife and Olinda, Dom Helder Câmara. Neither could come up with a satisfactory answer. Part of the difficulty, of course, is that in societies with a pattern of income distribution such as those in Latin America, it is difficult to imagine how a sheer increase in global income, without other, more searing changes, would do anything more than accentuate present inequalities. When Archbishop Câmara was asked about this, he replied, somewhat naively, I thought, that a change of social orders in Latin America and a change of heart in the United States should come at the same time.

Finally, those who would explain Latin American underdevelopment in terms of dependency theory face much the same dilemma as those who attribute the preponderance of conservative governments to the United States—they must credibly establish that there is another dispensation waiting in the wings of history to manifest itself. Unfortunately, this can be done only on faith. There are indeed parties and movements in many Latin American countries which espouse socially revolutionary doctrines. But their accession to power, or their capacity to carry out their programs once there, as the case of Allende illustrates, is extremely problematical. And their claim to represent the will of the masses must be taken for precisely what it is—a literary expression, nothing more.

NOT LONG ago the term "imperialism" connoted to most people either a foreign flag flying atop a historic fortress, complete with armies of occupation and arrogant colonial civil servants who dressed for dinner; or, in the case of Latin America, a proconsular U.S. ambassador counseled by the representatives of the leading American business concerns (somewhat in the fashion of the British as depicted in Gillo Pontecorvo's film, *Burn!*). Today, however, those who wish to attribute the ills of Latin America to the United States have an entirely new variety to harp upon—"cultural imperialism."

Now what is "cultural imperialism"? It is the forced assimilation, usually by insidious means, of native people into the homogenized dullness that allegedly characterizes suburban, middle-class America. There is no denying that since World War II Latin America has had ample opportunity to be exposed to our way of life. The obvious conduit is the cinema, which, in spite of a native industry growing in size and quality, is still predominantly imported. Even a Latin American film like Cantinflas's *El maestro* (1967), which was made in Mexico by a Mexican company, strongly resembles a Walt Disney "family comedy." Television, too, has been a display case for American products, typically superannuated detective series packaged for Latin consumption in Puerto Rico by teams that dub the dialogue in a language which, as the Mexican poet Octavio Paz has correctly observed, "is neither English nor Spanish."

As far as education is concerned, the United States is rapidly replacing Europe as the preferential place for Latin American elites to send their offspring, just as English has replaced French as the most popular second language. Even "young ladies of quality," formerly sent to Italian and Spanish convent schools, have recently been entrusted to the gentilities of Sweetbriar College or Bryn Mawr (where, by the way, they have had the opportunity to take courses from American Marxist historian Herbert Aptheker). For those of less exalted social status there is still the Fulbright Commission, which facilitates extended graduate study in the United States, and a host of short-term grants for what Latins like to call *perfeccionamiento*. The Ford Foundation has long been involved in Latin American education; when I was attending the University of Concepción in Chile in the mid-60's, they were trying to get the administration to introduce a freshman "liberal arts" year, in contrast to the prevalent practice of having students immediately enroll in their professional faculty *à la française*.

It is to advertising, however, that much of the recent talk of "cultural" imperialism is directed, and, as indicated above, there are indeed a host of major American agencies now doing business in Latin America. In addition, many Latins have started agencies of their own, copying, as best they can, the "Madison Avenue" technique. The assumption which many critics make about all of these cultural phenomena is that, by introducing unnecessary wants related to an alien way of life —freshmen courses in the liberal arts, Wonder Bread, *Hawaiian Eye*, and postgraduate work at MIT—Americans (or their Latin surrogates) can destroy the fibers of national identity, and make the advance of economic imperialism just that much easier.

Yet "cultural imperialism" is woefully inade-

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quate as a general theory of cultural development. Its limitations were recently illustrated in a film made by two graduate students at the University of California, Santa Barbara, shown at an academic conference. The subject was, we were told, "the continuity of cultural colonialism in Mexican history." The lights went out, and the screen lit up with an enormous Coca-Cola sign which, when the camera drew back, was revealed to dominate a Mexican native market. Then, in rapid succession, we were treated to images of "cultural imperialism," starting with Spanish armor, and passing through 18th-century coaches, Porfirio Díaz sporting Kaiser Wilhelm mustaches, elegant Mexican ladies in their Victorian best, right down to the display windows of the Sears store in Guadalajara. When the lights went on, we were left wondering, if these were inauthentic visions of Mexico past and present, where the "real" Mexico was to be found. Some, of course, might say that the only authentic Mexico is native or Indian—many Mexicans have said this, and some still do. But apart from the fact that this proposition is highly questionable (rather more than half the population is of mixed racial origin, and speaks Spanish as a first language), even if we agreed to it we would have to select among dozens of tribal groups—a competition, by the way, from which the Aztecs would be absent, having long since disappeared as a recognizable community. Even if we allow that the "real" Mexico is *mestizo* (of mixed Spanish and Indian origins), we are still left with the dilemma of determining *at what point* outside cultural influences can no longer be legitimately assimilated into Mexican life. For example, in the 19th century Austrian Archduke Maximilian von Hapsburg, who reigned briefly as Emperor of Mexico, brought with him a number of Austrians, Frenchmen, even a handful of Dalmatians, some of whose descendants remain in Mexico and regard themselves as part of the warp and woof of Mexican history. Who are we to gainsay their claims? Rather than talk about "cultural imperialism," it seems more logical to regard "Mexican" culture (except for folk culture, whose paradigms are more or less clear) as something still in the process of formation.

Nor have the theorists of "cultural imperialism" fully addressed themselves to the manner in which, say, Mexican culture in its broadest sense —marriage practices, the position of women, the extended family, patron-client relationships, attitudes toward death—have remained remarkably impervious to American trends and attitudes, in spite of an overwhelming Yankee presence in many areas of national life. Anthropologists and businessmen alike frequently remark upon the fact that much which seems at first glance "modern" in Mexico (or any other Latin American country), beneath surface appearances is nothing more than old wine in new bottles. Of whatever we decide *Mexicanidad* ("Mexican-ness") ultimately consists —and the debate is far from over—we will have to attribute to it a curious staying power in the face of pressures from *Yanquilandia*. Many Americans, by the way, who are freest with their accusations of "cultural imperialism" secretly despise the broadest cultural traditions of a country like Mexico—say, bullfighting or arranged marriages. This is their privilege, of course, but they must still identify for us the "real" Mexico they are trying to save.

One last word on this matter. Whenever I hear someone accuse the U.S. of eroding Latin America's cultural identity, I wonder which Latin America he is talking about. For to me, many of the most valuable manifestations of Latin American culture —the murals of Diego Rivera or David Alfaro Siqueiros, the poems of Rubén Darío or Nicolás Guillén or Pablo Neruda, the novels of Miguel Angel Asturias—originated in a creative response to the threat of American hegemony. Far from divesting Latin America of her sense of identity, we have done much to define it. ("The religion of Cubans," an angry patriot once said, "will be hatred of the United States.") Just as "Arabs" and "Indians" discovered in London that they were parts of nations whose existence they had scarcely imagined, in the clash of cultures Latin Americans may ultimately learn who they really are. Perhaps there is no need to thank the United States for the favor, but there is no need to regret it, either.

IN his vastly informative book, *The Aztec Image in the Western Mind* (1969), Professor Benjamin Keen shows how a vanished aboriginal civilization in Mexico could inspire four centuries of impassioned debate among Europeans, most of whom lived very far from their subject in both space and time. His point, of course, is that in the Aztecs foreign observers "saw" not a particular people who once lived on the shores of Lake Texcoco, but themselves in a primitive mirror.

Keen's metaphor could easily be extended to Latin America as a whole. For reasons which are not entirely clear (perhaps nothing more than the fact of its relative proximity to North Atlantic culture compared to other areas of the non-Western world), Latin America has become a theater in which many Europeans and North Americans have chosen to play out their fantasies. What they "see" in Latin America has come to tell us less about that region than about their own attitudes toward property and society. The result is not—as they think—a sympathetic interest in another way of life, but the ultimate form of cultural narcissism—it is, figuratively speaking, dressing up Aztecs and Incas in costumes borrowed from the old WPA "proletarian" theater.

The irony of all of this is that in treating Latin America thus, some of the most vociferous advo-

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cates of "self-determination" have by implication denied the region a life of its own. For if an entire continent must wait upon impulses from without in order to "be," then (except as a purely geographical expression) it does not really exist. Perhaps this is not what many critics of our supposed role in Latin America really intend, but it logically follows from much of what they say.

Many, too, seem to forget that "self-determination" includes the right to do what outsiders—even sympathetic outsiders—feel is wrong. Underlying much of the pop-journalism about Latin America is the assumption that only when a given government (say, Chile or Peru) is doing something of which the writer approves (and of which Washington disapproves) is it actualizing its independent "self." However, without indulging in a discussion of the merits and demerits of specific regimes, it is difficult to see why the political views of conservative and moderate Latin Americans are any less legitimate (or for that matter, less numerous) than those of a more radical persuasion.

The truth is, it is not difficult to imagine a dozen different topics, ranging from birth control to energy policy, on which any Latin American (Left or Right) would espouse views obnoxious to any North American (again, Left or Right), and, obviously, vice versa. We are dealing here not, as the dependency theorists would have us think, with one seamless entity, but with a diversity of worlds. Whether that is something to celebrate or deplore is another matter. But we could at least do our southern neighbors the honor of recognizing the fact, and shed our Latin American hairshirt, which is an affront to them, and a disservice to ourselves.

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Memoir of a Prosecutor

Irving Younger

ALTHOUGH I had been appointed an Assistant United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York under Eisenhower, I stayed on when Robert F. Kennedy took over the Department of Justice and Robert M. Morgenthau came in as United States Attorney.

On every assistant's desk was a buzzer operated from the front office. One morning late in the summer of 1961, mine rang. I walked around to Mr. Morgenthau's room. The door was closed, but the receptionist waved me in. Behind the desk sat Morgenthau, smoking a cigar. In a chair in front of the desk Robert Kennedy fidgeted with a pair of heavy horn-rimmed glasses. Morgenthau introduced me to the Attorney General, who nodded once. It was his only contribution to the conversation. I sat down, and Morgenthau proceeded to explain why I was there.

What he said and some of the events which followed are the subject of this article. I want to tell about them because truth is better than guff, and therefore we should know how powerful men actually use their time and opportunities. To the considerable disclosures of recent years, I here make my small addition.

"THE DEPARTMENT," said Morgenthau, "has a special interest in Roy Cohn."* That was no news to me. It had been the gossip of the office for months. "The Department thinks it would be a good idea to consolidate all of our Cohn activities in one assistant. I'm designating you. Review the files. Follow up. Go wherever you have to. Your job is to find out whether Cohn is guilty of something. The Department wants Cohn."

"I'll get him," I said, and nodded to Kennedy, who was still fidgeting with his glasses. Neither he nor Morgenthau spoke as I left the room. That afternoon, I began to read about Cohn.

Morgenthau had been right. Nothing in the files amounted to anything against Cohn. Even so, one possibility seemed worth pursuing. In 1960, a number of people had been indicted for securities fraud. The charge was that they had manipulated the price of the common stock of a company called Gulf Coast Leaseholds, Inc., by buying and selling the stock through a Liechtenstein entity named Brandel Trust, which in turn acted through a Swiss bank account. Among the defendants were a Zurich lawyer, Paul Hagenbach, and a New York promoter, John Van Allen. Hagenbach was the registered agent in Switzerland for Brandel. Van Allen had dealt with him and was also known to be friendly with Cohn. If Cohn were a principal in Brandel, he could be indicted for securities fraud. Hagenbach controlled Brandel's records, and in those records, I thought, would be the list of Brandel's principals.

"I'll go to Zurich and talk to Hagenbach," I told Morgenthau, "but there are two difficulties. One is that I don't have a passport. The other is how we're going to persuade Hagenbach to break Swiss anonymity law and give us the records."

"The first is easy," Morgenthau said. "You'll have a passport in twenty-four hours. Let me think about the second. Meanwhile, take a look at this." He handed me a photostat of Roy Cohn's 1960 income-tax return. It showed nothing to suggest a connection with Brandel.

I had my passport the next day. I also had a letter Morgenthau wrote for me to carry to Hagenbach. On official stationery, it read as follows:†

August 30, 1961

To whom it may concern:

The bearer of this letter, Irving Younger, is an Assistant United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York. He is authorized to speak for the Department of Justice and for me.

s/Robert M. Morgenthau
United States Attorney for
the Southern District of
New York

I reached Hagenbach by telephone. He would be willing to see me on Friday, September 1.

It wasn't hard to find his office in the Bahnhofstrasse, Zurich's main street. I arrived a few minutes early. Hagenbach was waiting at the door. He spoke slowly and clearly, in slightly accented but perfect English. We sat at a table covered with a green cloth.

"Why have you come to me?" he asked.

"To talk about your case."

"How do I know you are a federal prosecutor?"

I handed him my passport, my identification as an Assistant United States Attorney, and the letter from Morgenthau. He looked at each, returning it to me before examining the next. The passport and the identification I put back in my pocket. I left the letter on the table.

"I have nothing to say about my

IRVING YOUNGER *is Samuel S. Leibowitz Professor of Trial Techniques at Cornell Law School. His article, "Was Alger Hiss Guilty?," appeared in our August 1975 issue.*

* Because I had no tape recorder concealed on my person, I cannot represent that this and the other conversations set forth later are accurate to the word. They are substantially accurate, however. I have confirmed my recollection against the court records wherever possible.

† This letter was received in evidence as Government Exhibit 114 at the trial of the *Gulf Coast* case. I have reconstructed it from the court records, since the United States Attorney's office has failed to respond to my request for a copy.

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ase except that I am not guilty," ıe said.

"Maybe you aren't guilty," I re-)lied. "That will be for a jury to letermine when the case is tried."

"I am not a fool, Mr. Younger. I annot be extradited from Switzerand on a charge of securities raud, and surely you do not think hat I will go voluntarily to the Jnited States to be arrested and to tand trial."

"I know you are not a fool. That s why I thought we should talk bout your case."

"I will listen to you."

"There is a possibility, Mr. Hagnbach, that the indictment can be ismissed against you. Right now, r at least very soon."

"Who will dismiss the indictıent?"

"I will. I am in charge of the ase now."

"Why should you?"

"The indictment will be disıissed if you help the governıent."

"It has been a great embarrassıent to me to be indicted. My ients have read of it in the newsaper. It has hurt my practice."

I said nothing.

"What must be done?" he asked.

"I want to know everything)out Brandel."

"It is all in the records."

"What records? Where?"

"The records in my files and the :ords of the bank account."

"Then that is what I want."

"The records?"

"Yes. All of them. I want a copy every piece of paper to take back ith me."

"And if I give them to you?"

"The indictment against you will e dismissed. In our practice, we ll it a *nolle prosequi*."

"How can I be sure that it will ıppen?"

"I promise."

"How can I trust your promise?"

"There is the letter from Mr. orgenthau."

"May I keep it?"

"Yes." Hagenbach picked it up om the table and put it in a awer.

"Will you say in writing that the dictment will be dismissed?" he ked.

"Yes."

He gave me a pad. I wrote out the following and handed it to him:*

September 1, 1961

I promise Paul Hagenbach that the indictment against him, *United States* v. *Van Allen, Hagenbach, et al.*, 60 Cr. 282, will be dismissed within sixty days.

s/Irving Younger
Assistant United States Attorney
for the Southern District
of New York

"Now the records," I said.

"It will take several hours to make copies of everything," he said. "Come back later this afternoon and I will have them for you."

As Hagenbach took me to the door, he said, "Do not think that I am violating Swiss law. That I would not do. I have secured an opinion from the Attorney General of Switzerland that, since I am the registered agent of the Trust, I have the right to waive anonymity and disclose the affairs of the Trust to whomever I wish."

"I'm very glad to hear it," I said, and left to take a long walk around the city. When I returned, three hours later, I brought with me a large suitcase. Piled on the table were photostats of several hundred documents, the records of the Brandel Trust and of its bank account. Hagenbach helped me pack them in the suitcase and, thirty-six hours later, I sat in my office in the United States Courthouse studying them.

They were not what the Department wanted. They proved a great deal about the guilt of Van Allen and the other defendants in the *Gulf Coast* case but nothing about Roy Cohn.

That was my report to Morgenthau. "You're sure they don't give us Cohn?" he asked.

"I'm sure," I said. "Not one piece of paper in there is evidence that Cohn was behind Brandel."

"Well, we know Cohn is smart. Maybe he set the thing up so that the records don't involve him."

"Possible," I said. "But if he was in it, he needed a front."

"Who?"

Among those who clearly had participated in the manipulation, only John Van Allen might have been a stand-in for Cohn. Now, Morgenthau agreed, we had to break Van Allen. Once we broke Van Allen, Van Allen would give us Cohn. To break Van Allen, we needed to hang a jail sentence over his head. Thus it was necessary to push ahead with the *Gulf Coast* case, in which, with the records I had brought back from Zurich, the government could be certain of a conviction.

But this raised yet other problems. If the *Gulf Coast* case was to be tried and the Brandel records put into evidence, the government would need someone to call to the stand to testify to their authenticity, someone who could swear that, of his own knowledge, these were indeed the records of Brandel and of Brandel's bank account. That witness could only be Paul Hagenbach, and Hagenbach, as a citizen and resident of Switzerland, was not subject to a subpoena ordering him to testify in a federal court in New York City. To get him on the witness stand we would be obliged to persuade him. The only thing we had to persuade him with was the *Gulf Coast* indictment. But of course I had already promised Hagenbach, in writing, that the indictment would be dismissed within sixty days.

"What do we do?" The answer was to break the promise.

Hagenbach's indictment was not dismissed by November 1. Instead, I assured him by telephone that, for technical reasons I did not want to go into, the *nolle prosequi* would be postponed for a while. I also said that I wanted to see him again.

Hagenbach met me at the American consulate in Zurich on October 25. I explained three things to him. First, his testimony would be necessary in the *Gulf Coast* trial, which might take place in a year or so. Second, to prepare for that testimony, I needed him in New York to go before the grand jury, identify the Brandel records, and tell

* This document was received in evidence as Government Exhibit 113 at the *Gulf Coast* trial. Here too the government has failed to respond to my request for a copy, and I have reconstructed it from the court records.

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what he knew about the stock manipulation. Third, although it would be impossible to dismiss the indictment against him until later, he would receive a written guarantee of safe conduct when it was time for him to come to New York. He said that he understood. I cautioned him to keep the matter secret. "There's no need for the other defendants to know what you're doing," I said. Hagenbach agreed, and I returned home to go to work on the *Gulf Coast* case.

IT WAS three months before I was ready to put Hagenbach before the grand jury. I had not been able to give much time to *Gulf Coast* because other aspects of Cohn's activities had occupied my attention. Among other things, I went to Panama to look into the possibility that Cohn had used a Panamanian corporation for illegal purposes. I found nothing. I spent many days talking to John Van Allen, trying to persuade him to tell me something about Cohn. He said that he had nothing to tell. I subpoenaed Cohn before a grand jury. He appeared and responded to my interrogation with exquisite self-assurance. The jurors found no cause to indict. By February, chiefly through the help of my colleagues in the United States Attorney's office, the Brandel records had been sorted and the *Gulf Coast* case begun to be analyzed. That we would convict Van Allen and the other defendants was obvious. Whether Van Allen would then break and implicate Cohn in anything indictable remained an open question. Cohn's name appeared in the documents, but not in any way to provide evidence of criminality. Also mentioned once or twice was a New York lawyer, a friend and sometime professional associate of Cohn, named John Foley.

I telephoned Hagenbach and arranged to have him and his wife fly from Zurich to New York on the twenty-fourth of February. Two days before that, Morgenthau cabled Hagenbach a promise of safe conduct in the United States. On Saturday, the twenty-fourth, in the early afternoon, I was at Idlewild Airport (as it was then called) to meet the Hagenbachs and see them safely on their way to their hotel the Plaza. Unknown to them, I was accompanied by six FBI agents who had been instructed to stay back in the crowd and make sure that all went well. One of the agents, equipped with a camera, was stationed above the main floor, behind the glass wall of the observation deck, photographing everything that happened.

I waited in the room to which passengers came immediately after leaving the plane. The Hagenbachs were traveling on a Swiss diplomatic passport, and so customs had waived inspection of their luggage. They appeared. I greeted them and walked with them around the customs desks toward the main reception area. Perhaps three hundred people were milling about, waiting for other passengers to pass through customs. It was difficult to move through the crowd. I had fallen a yard or two behind the Hagenbachs when a man stepped up to them and said, "Hello, Paul. What brings you here?" I recognized Foley. Turning away, I walked in the opposite direction until I came to a bench. I sat down. The Hagenbachs were gone; Foley was gone. In five minutes, one of the FBI agents found me.

"Did you see it?" I asked.

"Yes. Who was that?"

"Someone I didn't expect to be here. His name is Foley. Where are they now?"

"The Hagenbachs are standing on the sidewalk outside, waiting for Foley to get his car."

"I want to talk to Hagenbach."

"Let's go," the agent said, and led me outside. The Hagenbachs were there.

"How did Foley know you were arriving?" I asked Hagenbach.

He shrugged.*

"Where is Foley taking you?"

"To the Plaza."

"All right. Go with him. But don't say anything about me. I'll call you tonight."

The agent and I walked away. "I want them followed," I said.

We had two cars. In one, four agents went ahead to the Plaza. The remaining two agents and I, in the other, trailed Foley's car from the airport to midtown Manhattan, where we lost it in traffic.

At the Plaza, we found the firs four agents standing in the lobby One of them reported that th Hagenbachs had arrived wit Foley and that all three had gon upstairs to the Hagenbachs' room

I went to a telephone booth an called Morgenthau at home. I tol him that Foley had met the Hagen bachs and escorted them to th hotel.

"Foley's acting for Cohn," Mor genthau said. "Cohn sent him t find out what Hagenbach is doin here and prevent him from testify ing. We were right. Van Allen ca give us Cohn, and if we get Foley Foley will also give us Cohn."

"What now?" I asked.

"Stay there. Talk to Hagenbac after Foley leaves and find ou what's going on. Then call me. I'l let the Department know."

After sending the agents home, sat in the lobby and read a newspa per. I saw Foley come out of the e evator. He left the hotel withou looking around. I called Hage bach and asked him to meet me i the lobby. He came down, and w walked back and forth in front c the hotel.

"What did Foley want?" I asked

"Nothing."

"Did he ask why you were i New York?"

"Yes."

"What did you say?"

"That I was going to see you."

"Anything else?"

"That I might go before th grand jury."

"What did he say?"

"That he would like to talk t me before I do."

"Will you?"

"Yes."

"When?"

"We made an appointment fo tomorrow at three. Foley is to com here."

Hagenbach returned to h room. I telephoned Morgenthau.

"We'll bug the room," he said "Call me back in an hour."

* At the *Gulf Coast* trial, Hagenbac testified that Foley had telephoned hi in Zurich and that Hagenbach had hin self given Foley the date and time of h arrival. Foley was not a defendant in th *Gulf Coast* case, and, so far as I ev found out, he never did anything unlaw ful.

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I did. "The Department says we can put in the bug," he said. "Call the Bureau. They know what's happening and they'll get it going."

The FBI field office in New York had electronic technicians on its staff. I was told by the agent in charge of the office, whom I called at once, that the FBI technical men would be at the Plaza the next morning to install the bug. "You take care of the legal refinements," he said.

They were not complicated. A "bug" is a microphone concealed in a room. The law permits the installation of a bug and the recording of conversations thereby overheard so long as the occupant of the room gives his permission.

I called Hagenbach and asked whether I might come up. He said yes. After listening to my explanation of what we proposed, he consented.

Early the next morning, I met seven or eight agents at the hotel. They spoke to the manager, who gave them the room next door to the Hagenbachs', and they began to set up their recording equipment. I met Hagenbach in the coffee shop and told him the microphone would be installed in his room in the course of the morning. "I don't want to be there when they put it in," he said. "I don't want to know where it is."

"Then you and Mrs. Hagenbach go out for a few hours. The mike will be set up while you're out."

"We have no place to go," he said.

I had no car and I didn't know how to drive. One of the agents undertook to chauffeur the Hagenbachs and me around Manhattan. While we saw the sights, the other agents installed the microphone in the Hagenbachs' room.

At three o'clock Foley walked into the lobby. I was sitting in a corner and saw him take the elevator upstairs. All of the FBI agents were in the room next door to the Hagenbachs' with their recording equipment. The microphone was in place, and if perjury were to be suborned, there would be unequivocal evidence of it: a tape recording that would convict Foley and consequently give us Cohn. I had called Morgenthau at home several times during the day. He said he wanted to know what was occurring as soon as it occurred. So did the Department.

At about five o'clock Foley and Hagenbach came out of the elevator and walked to the sidewalk. Foley got into a cab and drove away. Hagenbach returned to the lobby. "What happened?" I asked.

"Nothing," he said.

I went up to the agents' room. They were packing their equipment. "What happened?" I asked.

"Nothing," one of the agents said.

"That's what Hagenbach says. They must've talked about something. What did you hear?"

"The microphone didn't work."

BY MID-SPRING, I was able to report to Morgenthau on the product of my nine months' labor. Hagenbach had testified before the grand jury, and the *Gulf Coast* case was being prepared for trial.* I had been to Europe twice, to Central America once, and to various places within the United States. I had studied every official file in which Roy Cohn was mentioned. I had put Cohn before the grand jury. I had devoted myself single-mindedly to investigating Roy Cohn, and the result was nothing.

"I'm licked," I said. "If he has violated the law, I can't find it."

"I'll inform the Department," Morgenthau said.

I understood that I was no longer the Department's man on Cohn.

I resigned as an Assistant United States Attorney at the end of June and went into private practice. Not long after, I was in the courthouse attending to a client's case when, in the corridor, I met William G. Hundley, then head of the Department's Organized Crime Section and reputed to be a close friend of the Attorney General.

"I've been meaning to call you," he said. "Do you have a moment?"

We stepped into an empty courtroom and sat in the back row.

"Listen, Irv," he said. "What about your resignation?"

"What about it?"

"We've heard that you were forced out for being too tough on Cohn."

"That's not true. I resigned because I'd been in the office long enough. It was time to move on to something else."

"Well, if you say so, OK. But the Department thinks maybe Cohn got to Morgenthau."

The Department need have had no qualms about Morgenthau's loyalty and zeal. In September 1963, he indicted Cohn for perjury and related crimes. The jury acquitted. In November 1968, he indicted Cohn for fraud and related crimes. The jury acquitted. In January 1969, he indicted Cohn for bribery and related crimes. The jury acquitted.

Immediately after his first indictment, Roy Cohn called a press conference to denounce Morgenthau. "Ever since Morgenthau took office," he said, "there isn't a defendant or a criminal around who hasn't been offered a proposition to get something on me."† Cohn thought that Morgenthau wanted to imprison him in retaliation for Cohn's investigation, under McCarthy, of Communist infiltration into the Treasury Department when Henry Morgenthau, Robert's father, was Secretary. I do not know whether there is any truth to this, nor do I know whether it is true, as I heard said in the United States Attorney's office, that Robert Kennedy had hated Cohn since the day when, both of them working for McCarthy, they had quarreled and come to blows. I do know that Cohn's complaint of vendetta deserves attention. In 1961, the Department decided to "get" Cohn—I know because I was there—and three times over the next several years brought him to trial. It is one of the remarkable things in modern legal history that Cohn was never found guilty, for a maxim among prosecutors is that if you indict enough you will ultimately convict.

But Cohn's escape is beside the

* It was tried from November 14, 1962, to August 7, 1963. Hagenbach testified for the government, as did John Van Allen, who had changed his plea to guilty. All the remaining defendants were convicted, and every conviction but one was affirmed on appeal.

† Quoted in the New York *Times*, September 6, 1963, p. 26.

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point. The point is the peril. A prosecutor's power to damage or destroy anyone he chooses to indict is virtually limitless. Grand juries almost always do the prosecutor's bidding. If the procedural niceties have been complied with, a judge can only order the case to trial. And then it will be up to the jury. Someone else, submitting himself three times to twelve citizens selected at random, might not have been so lucky or so able to bear the cost as Cohn. Someone else, the next person a prosecutor decides to "get," may be convicted or ruined in the process.

I can think of no institutional safeguard against such a possibility. Everything rests on the honor, temperament, and professionalism of the prosecutor. Given the right man or woman in the job, only those who have something to fear need be afraid. Put the wrong person in charge and we are all in danger.

HAVING spoken of the Department, of Morgenthau, and of Kennedy, let me now speak of myself. I read over this narrative and I am not proud. When Morgenthau said, "The Department wants Cohn," I replied, with enthusiasm, "I'll get him." When Morgenthau showed me Cohn's income-tax return, I did not ask him whether it was proper that he have it. When I thought it necessary to obtain the Brandel records, I made the promise that would get me the records, careless of the legality of my conduct in Switzerland, where I then was; and later, when it suited my purpose, I broke the promise.* When I wanted to know what Foley would say to Hagenbach, I bugged Hagenbach's room, securing a consent from Hagenbach that can hardly be regarded as freely given, and closing my mind to the affront to Foley's privacy. It was the power of power. If I possibly could, I was going to be the one to do the job the Department wanted done. Not once did I stop to think what it was a Department of.

*The indictment against Hagenbach was dismissed sometime after my resignation as an Assistant United States Attorney.

The Yeshivah World

David Singer

IN THE solidly middle-class suburb of Lakewood, New Jersey, there exists a remarkable institution of higher learning that is remarkable chiefly for what it does not do. It completely ignores science and the humanities, it provides no professional training whatsoever, it has only one subject in its curriculum, and it employs only one faculty member, who usually lectures just once a week for two hours in a language that is not native to most of his hearers. It enrolls male students ranging in age from eighteen to thirty-five, but makes no attempt to coordinate their studies on the basis of age or level of achievement, leaving them totally on their own to unravel tortuous arguments about religious and legal questions that were first raised many hundreds of years ago. Finally, it insists that students study ten hours a day, six days a week, yet makes no effort to encourage them to put their knowledge to any practical use after they leave its precincts.

The institution I am describing, the Beth Medrash Govoha, is a yeshivah, an academy for advanced study of the Talmud and its commentaries and codes. The Lakewood yeshivah is generally regarded as the most distinguished in America—the Harvard, one might say, of American yeshivot—but it is only one of many other such academies that have been established in the wake of the renaissance of Orthodox Judaism in the United States. Though it is often assumed that traditional Jewish learning scarcely exists in this country, the fact is that yeshivot have not only taken root in America, but have flourished to a remarkable degree.* Indeed, the number of students presently studying Talmud on an advanced level in the United States compares quite favorably with the number who were enrolled in the great yeshivot of Eastern Europe during their heyday—and this despite the fact that the yeshivot have made no concessions to modernity, and few to the American environment.

THE central role played by the yeshivah in traditional Jewish society reflects the absolute preeminence given to the study of Torah (the Written and Oral Law) in rabbinic Judaism. For the rabbinic sages, who shaped the classical Judaism that was in force until modern times, study of Torah was not merely one among many acts of piety, but rather was the quintessential expression of Jewish faith. Believing, as they did, that Torah (in Jacob Neusner's words) was nothing less than "the divine account of the inner structure of reality," and that studying Torah was the "way to the apprehension of God and the attainment of the sacred," the Rabbis made study of Torah the focal point of Jewish religious life.

The yeshivah, as the primary institutional setting for organized study of Torah, dates back to the

DAVID SINGER *writes regularly on matters of Jewish concern in* COMMENTARY, Midstream, Judaism, *and elsewhere. Among Mr. Singer's previous articles in* COMMENTARY *are "Voices of Orthodoxy" (July 1974) and "The Growth of the Day-School Movement" (August 1973).*

*Yeshiva University's Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) in New York City is not properly included among the yeshivot since it is a professional school that trains men for the pulpit rabbinate. It should be noted, however, that Talmud is taught at RIETS in exactly the same fashion as at the yeshivot. Moreover, the school is headed by Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, considered by many to be the leading talmudic scholar in the world. Both RIETS and the majority of yeshivot award the traditional *semikhah* (ordination), which carries the title "rabbi" and certifies that the bearer is competent to decide matters of Jewish law. Many outstanding yeshivah students never bother to obtain this degree.

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1st century B.C.E., the beginning of rabbinic Judaism. (The term itself is from the Hebrew verb "to sit," and refers to the fixed order in which the sages and their pupils were seated in the academy.) The first yeshivot were located in Jerusalem, where students would gather to spend time in the company of teachers—listening to their discussions of law (*halakhah*) and observing their juridical procedures. Jerusalem remained the center of study until the catastrophic destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E., when new centers—of which Yavneh was the most celebrated—were reconstituted in ancient Palestine.

With the completion of the Mishnah, the first stratum of the Talmud, at the end of the 2nd century C.E., the center of Jewish learning shifted to Babylonia, where it remained for some eight centuries. The great Babylonian yeshivot strove to produce scholars conversant in the Oral Law and skilled at applying existing legal norms to new situations. Toward this end, the head of the yeshivah (*rosh eshivah*) expounded on the Mishnah twice daily, conveying his remarks to "interpreters," who in turn relayed them to the assembled students. Outstanding pupils repeated and explained the lesson, which was then committed to memory by all. Students were also given practical legal experience through their involvement in discussions leading to *halakhic* rulings on matters of the day.

The Babylonian academies served as prototypes for all the subsequent yeshivot that would be established in centers of Jewish learning throughout the Diaspora, following in the wake of continual Jewish migrations, now flourishing, now declining in accordance with shifting Jewish fortunes. Thus, between the 10th and 17th centuries there were renowned academies in the Maghreb, Spain, France, Germany, and Eastern Europe. Some were private institutions run by individual rabbinic scholars, while others were maintained and regulated by the community. The Sephardic yeshivot in North Africa and Spain had a broad curriculum of Talmud, Bible, Midrash, and even Kabbalah, while the Ashkenazic academies in France, Germany, and Eastern Europe focused almost exclusively on the Talmud and its various commentaries. But all were at one in their commitment to the study of Torah "for its own sake" (*torah lish'mah*), an ideal which the Jews carried with them to the farthest reaches of the Diaspora.

It was in the late 18th and early 19th centuries that the groundwork was laid for the type of yeshivah familiar to us today. This "modern" academy, which has hardly changed at all over a period of nearly two hundred years, was first developed in Lithuania by the disciples of Rabbi Elijah ben Solomon (1720-97), the illustrious "Vilna Gaon" whose name is synonymous with that prodigious intellectuality which would become the hallmark of the Lithuanian yeshivot.* Though the Gaon himself, who reputedly studied Talmud eighteen hours a day, established no formal academy of his own, in 1803 his chief disciple, Rabbi Chaim ben Isaac (known as Rabbi Chaim Volozhyner), founded a yeshivah in the town of Volozhyn, which set the pattern for future yeshivot in Eastern Europe, Palestine, and the United States during the 19th and 20th centuries. Rabbi Chaim identified study with direct knowledge of God, and propounded the view that *torah lish'mah* meant study purely for the sake of cognitive understanding. He also introduced a number of practical innovations, including the setting of extremely high entrance requirements, the system of collegial (*havruta*) study, and the training of students in the rigorous internal analysis of texts which was the heart of the Gaon's talmudic methodology.

Rabbi Chaim's work at Volozhyn was carried forward by two great talmudists, Rabbi Naphtali Zevi Judah Berlin (known as "the Neziv") who headed the yeshivah for some forty years, and Rabbi Chaim Soloveichick (known as Rabbi Chaim Brisker) who developed an original, highly analytical approach to Talmud study. By 1892, when the Volozhyn academy was forcibly closed by the Russian authorities, it had become the acknowledged "mother of yeshivot"—counting among its spiritual offspring a whole series of renowned academies all over Eastern Europe. Lithuania continued to be the preeminent center of traditional Jewish learning down to the time of the Holocaust.

GIVEN this venerable history in Europe, it would seem quite natural to assume that the yeshivah was imported into America along with the first waves of Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe. In fact, however, prior to the mid-1920's there was only one small yeshivah on New York's Lower East Side—for the simple reason that most of the Jews who settled there were not Orthodox, but had come to America at least in part in order to escape from the religious confines of the *shtetl*. (So scant was traditional Jewish learning among the first wave of Jewish immigrants to the United States that when the Jews of New York began a search for a chief rabbi in 1887, no American rabbi was even considered for the position.) It was not until the period of World War II, when large numbers of Orthodox Jews came to the United States as refugees from Nazism, that the yeshivah first emerged as a significant institution on the American Jewish scene. Confirmed traditionalists, the new refugees were determined to recreate in America the patterns of religious life they had maintained so tenaciously in the Old World—a determination particularly strong among those who were themselves products of the various East European academies.

For these people, everything had changed. The schools that had made up their spiritual and intellectual world had literally gone up in flames—yet study of Torah remained their central imperative. They therefore set out, like the founders of rabbinic Judaism in the wake of the destruction of the Second Temple, to establish a new institutional base for the Jewish way of life as they knew it, to create a Yavneh in America.

One member of this group, and

* See Chaim Raphael, "The Litvak Connection and Hasidic Chic," in the May COMMENTARY.

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the one who perhaps best exemplified the values and aspirations of the World War II wave of Orthodox immigrants, was Rabbi Aaron Kotler (1892-1962), a man of great personal magnetism and iron will. A graduate of the celebrated academy at Slobodka, and connected by marriage to an illustrious yeshivah dynasty, Rabbi Kotler had for twenty years been head of the yeshivah at Kletzk, where his reputation as an outstanding talmudist had attracted students from all over Europe. When the Nazis came to power, he, along with some of his students, managed to escape to America via Japan. Arriving on these shores in middle age, in flight for his life, and without knowing a word of English, Rabbi Kotler proceeded to pick up exactly where he had left off in Lithuania—recreating a center where he and his students could pursue the study of Talmud in its purest form. The result of his efforts was the Beth Medrash Govoha in Lakewood. Though not the first of the new wave of yeshivot, it was without question the most rigorous and unsparing in its standards; all of the existing American yeshivot, as well as those that were established subsequently, came to bear the marks of its influence.

Today there are more than forty academies of varying size for advanced talmudic study in the United States, with a total enrollment of more than 6,500 students. Some of these, like the Rabbinical College of Telshe in Cleveland, are transplanted European yeshivot; others are native American institutions. Though most are to be found in New York and its vicinity, there are also thriving yeshivot in Baltimore, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, Detroit, St. Louis, Denver, and Los Angeles.

The students enrolled in these schools represent a cross-section of contemporary American Jewish Orthodoxy, the yeshivah being one of the few places today where reigning sectarian antagonisms are suspended. Within its walls, Orthodox Jews of every variety—traditionalists and modernists, *Mitnaggdim* and Hasidim, Ashkenazim and Sephardim—meet and mingle as equals, with the familiar narrow-brimmed, black fedora that is worn by almost all of them serving as the badge of a common fraternity. For some members of this fraternity, attendance at a yeshivah is an established family tradition. The typical yeshivah student today, however, is more likely to be the son of a businessman or professional whose own formal Jewish education ended on the elementary or high-school level, and who, very much in the American tradition, wants his offspring to enjoy the opportunities that he himself was denied.

What goes on inside a yeshivah? At the Rabbinical College of Telshe in Cleveland, to take one example, students are divided into four classes, each with its own teacher, and each following a designated curriculum and fixed pace of study. In order to encourage older students to assist younger ones, all of the students are assigned the same tractate of the Talmud during a given semester. Class attendance is compulsory, as is attendance at an ongoing series of discourses on legal and ethical subjects given by the two heads of the yeshivah. Finally, the Telshe academy inculcates discipline by means of periodic examinations, and by requiring those students who seek rabbinic ordination to write dissertations on *halakhic* subjects.

As compared with the Rabbinical College of Telshe, the Lakewood yeshivah seems almost anarchic. The school's one and only faculty member, the head of the yeshivah, has very little contact with the students, leaving them for the most part to fend for themselves, poring over their books for hours on end in one of several crowded, noisy study halls. Since there are no formal classes at Lakewood, any two students who get along well together and who are able to study together in a compatible fashion are free to form a *havruta*. Students are also free to request permission to substitute alternate tractates for the ones that have been assigned for study each semester. To cap things off, there are no examinations at Lakewood and no such thing as graduation. Students remain at the yeshivah for as many years as they wish, and leave when they feel ready.

Judged solely in terms of numbers, the yeshivah movement in America is obviously a success. In little more than three decades, a cultural vacuum has been filled, and a new and apparently sturdy entity has taken root on the American Jewish scene. There is no denying that this is all to the good, and no gainsaying the fact, particularly in view of what generally passes for Jewish education in the United States, that the yeshivot, if nothing else, are deeply serious about what they do. But precisely for this reason, one is required to ask how well they serve their own announced ideals, the educational requirements of their students, and the overall needs of the American Jewish community.

The first problem that arises in this connection is with the caliber of the student body. Jewish popular mythology to the contrary notwithstanding, not all students of Talmud are geniuses, and the yeshivah is not that exclusive preserve of brilliant minds that it has been made out to be. This was true in the European past as well as in the American present, but with one important difference. In Lithuania the yeshivot were elite institutions that catered to the few—a fairly select group of motivated and talented young men who, in the midst of grinding poverty, dared to aspire to scholarship. Not everyone achieved this goal, but the elite nature of the academies created an environment in which a good number actually did. In America, on the other hand, the relative prosperity of Orthodox Jews has brought a yeshivah education within reach of almost everyone. At the same time, the heads of yeshivot have increasingly come to view their schools less as temples of pure learning than as instruments for inculcating Orthodoxy in a secular society, and this has led them to adopt much less stringent admissions policies than in the past. Some good has come from the resultant democratization, but it has also led, inevitably, to a lowering of the standards of study.

The lowering of standards has not been accompanied, however, by any recognition on the part of the American yeshivot that they have

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ceased to function as the elite institutions of tradition and have in effect taken on a new role. The yeshivot continue to define their goal as the nurturing of scholars and continue to reflect this goal in a curriculum consisting of Talmud and virtually nothing else, quite as though they seriously expect to produce cadres of outstanding Talmud scholars. Since this goal is simply not viable for most yeshivah students today, would not a more diversified program of Jewish study be more to the point? Most yeshivah students are appallingly ignorant of Bible and Midrash, for example, though they too are part of Torah, not to mention Jewish philosophy and the ethical literature which goes by the name of *musar*. Would not exposure to this body of learning be an excellent way of promoting the growth of the students' religious personalities, something that the yeshivot very much desire to do? Talmud study alone, particularly of the kind that is enshrined in the Lithuanian yeshivah tradition, with its uncompromising appeal to the intellect at the expense of the emotions, is simply too specialized a curriculum for the general run of yeshivah students today.

IF THE yeshivot are not sufficiently in touch with the needs of their students, they are not in touch at all with the needs of American Jews in general, and hence have little if any impact on Jewish religious and cultural expression outside the Orthodox community. This divorcement from the mainstream of American Jewish life is in fact a matter of choice, for the yeshivah "world," synonymous as it is with sectarian Orthodoxy, seeks to safeguard Jewish tradition through a conscious policy of isolation. In the social sphere, this implies a flat refusal to have anything to do with institutions and organizations in which Conservative or Reform spokesmen are officially represented. It also implies, for the majority of yeshivah students, a rejection of the rabbinate as a career, since that would place them under the thumb of laymen whose Orthodox standards are often not up to par. (Most yeshivah graduates enter the field of Jewish education, or pursue business or professional careers.) In the intellectual sphere, the policy of isolation implies a rejection of modern secular culture and its chief symbol, a college education. Some yeshivot (the Beth Medrash Govoha and the Rabbinical College of Telshe are two examples) actually forbid their students to attend college, while others permit it only on a *de facto* basis (and as an evening activity) as an aid to earning a living in later life. In fact, more and more American-born yeshivah students are choosing not to go to college.

Obviously, then, most yeshivah graduates are simply not in a position to understand the hopes and aspirations, the fears and concerns, of the typical American Jew. Nor, more importantly, is there any way in which they can communicate their own sense of the contemporary relevance of Torah study to Jews enmeshed in the modern experience. Yet some day, perhaps, the regrettable breach between these two worlds may be healed. If America in the 1970's is the last place in the world where one would expect to find thousands of native-born young people studying Talmud on an advanced level—on any level at all, for that matter—it may not be too much to expect comparable surprises in the future.

Music

Bernstein—The Performer as Theorist

Edward Rothstein

SINCE 1943, when at the age of twenty-five he became the assistant conductor of the New York Philharmonic, Leonard Bernstein has been a dominant figure on the American musical scene. In 1958 he became the Philharmonic's music director, one of the first American-born, American-trained conductors of any major orchestra; he is now its first Conductor Laureate. In the 50's he taught at Brandeis University and Tanglewood and brought his talents as a pedagogue to the television screen in his "Omnibus" broadcasts and Young Peoples' Concerts.

His recordings with the New York Philharmonic cover the orchestral repertoire from Bach to the early moderns and their listing takes up two-and-a-half pages in the Schwann Catalogue. As a composer he has written music for the concert hall and the ballet as well as for the Broadway stage and the movie screen. He has championed once neglected composers like Gustav Mahler, and young artists like André Watts, Glenn Gould, and Michael Tilson Thomas. Altogether Bernstein's personality—described by Harold Schonberg as "part visionary, part oozing with sex, part filled with suppressed nervousness"—has captured the attention of a large and devoted public, upon whom he lavishes large amounts of devotion in return.

In 1973 Bernstein brought his remarkable personality to Harvard, where as Norton Professor of Poetry he lectured on musical poetics —as Igor Stravinsky, Paul Hindemith, Aaron Copland, Carlos Cha-

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EDWARD ROTHSTEIN *is a young musician and writer who lives in New York. Mr. Rothstein's "Bach in the Original" appeared in our May issue.*

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vez, and Roger Sessions had done before him. Where, however, his predecessors' lectures were for the most part brief subjective explorations of the musical art, Bernstein's were meant to provide, in a "quasi-scientific" manner, a musical grammar that would not only make sense out of Western musical tradition but indicate some of the innate structures of mind which make music the "universal language."

To aid him in this project, Bernstein used all the sonic and visual resources of the movie theater in which the lectures were delivered. I attended several of these six lecture-performances. Bernstein delivered his credo standing at the podium, his voice modulating through all of the emotional keys. Slides were flashed on the large screen behind him to illustrate such matters as the deep structure of a complicated sentence. At various times during the lectures, films were shown of Bernstein conducting the Boston Symphony in his best choreographic manner, including music ranging from Mozart's G-minor Symphony to Stravinsky's *Oedipus Rex*. And Bernstein in the flesh constantly illustrated musical points at the piano—the harmonics of a vibrating string, ambiguity in Chopin, Stravinsky's allusions to *Aida*—groaning and straining with every phrase.

The theatrical high point probably came in the fifth lecture. From the podium Bernstein introduced his performance of the Adagio from Mahler's Ninth Symphony. He spoke of our death-haunted century and Mahler's prophetic genius and described the last moments of the piece with its dying musical strands. His voice lowered, his eyes tightened, and in quoting Keats, "half in love with easeful death," his words became a whispered version of Mahler's music. The house lights dimmed slowly. His last sentence trailed almost inaudibly off into total darkness. A moment later the large silver screen lit up with the image of a sweaty, impassioned Bernstein giving the downbeat to Mahler's Adagio. The audience was entranced, delighted with the thrill of the ride.

Subsequently Bernstein did a second, less impassioned version of the lectures which was videotaped and shown on PBS last season. Still later the sound tracks of the tapes were released as Columbia recordings, in six sets (seventeen discs), with New York Philharmonic performances generally substituted for the original Boston Symphony ones.* And now the lectures have assumed final form as a book, *The Unanswered Question*.† The text is taken from the transcripts of the recordings with only slight and insufficient editing. And like the lectures, the book is an extravagant production, boxed with three seven-inch recordings containing musical illustrations deemed necessary to the text, and including musical scores for all of Bernstein's keyboard discussions as well as numerous photographs of Bernstein in pensive, declarative, and studious poses.

THE organization of the book also follows the format of the lectures. The first three chapters present what Bernstein calls the "Chomsky Connection"—the connection between music and Noam Chomsky's linguistic theories. In the first lecture, "Musical Phonology," Bernstein discusses the sonic vocabulary of music. Next, in "Musical Syntax," he takes up the structural organization of musical material, and then in "Musical Semantics" he presents the musical and extra-musical meanings of composition. Each lecture includes demonstrations of the theoretical discussion in analyses of various works. The last three lectures apply Chomskian grammar to historical and critical questions in order to answer "The Unanswered Question"—whither music in our century?

According to Bernstein, the world's differing musics develop out of an innate tonal musical-grammatical competence similar to the innate linguistic competence of Chomskian theory. In Bernstein's view, the source of the contemporary crisis in music derives from an effort, inaugurated by Arnold Schoenberg in the atonal revolution, to free music from its moorings in the innate and universal language of tonality. The answer to "the unanswered question" he finds in Stravinsky who undertook the "rescue operation," the "huge project of saving tonality." Drawing on primitive music, letting tonality clash with itself in savage polytonal dissonance, striving for emotional distance in order to counteract Romanticism, allowing emotion to enter only obliquely, alluding constantly to the musical texts of the past—"This is the essence of Stravinsky's neoclassicism. He is now the great eclectic, the Thieving Magpie, *La Gazza Ladra*, unashamedly borrowing and stealing from every musical museum." Stravinsky's power is the power of modernity and the modern temper—ironic, joking, mismatching sentiment and form in violated metaphors—but it is a power which rests ultimately on a refusal to surrender the legacy of the past.

Music, then, must return to the tonal. The atonal project and its descendants must, says Bernstein, be left behind:

> My words are poor, my diagrams even poorer, but this one thing I intuitively know to be true, and I will put my hand in the fire for it, that whatever that creative mystery is . . . it cannot exist or come to be unless it is inextricably rooted in the rich earth of our innate response in the deep unconscious regions where the universals of tonality and language reside. The Poetry of Earth is ceasing never.

Now regardless of whether it is possible to prove that tonality is innate, Bernstein has assuredly not done so. His belief in the inateness of tonality is never argued for or justified, and it remains therefore a matter of aesthetic judgment. As such it may be extreme (and, as I would argue, both regressive and mistaken), but it is in no way alone. Paul Hindemith expressed similar sentiments in his own Norton lectures twenty-six years ago using similar reasoning and even a similar vocabulary: "In producing and perceiving music you must keep your feet on the solid ground of our earth, although

* Columbia M2X 33014, M2X 33017, M3X 33020, M3X 33024, M3X 33028, M4X 33032.

† Harvard University Press, 428 pp., $20.00.

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with your imagination you may roam through the universe." "It is quite impossible to understand melodic lines without harmonic and tonal implications." It is hopeless to avoid this natural "gravitation"; atonal music can only lead to "spatial dizziness." And Irving Kolodin has written: "Without a point of tonal reference . . . aural relationships are deprived of an element as vital to musical comprehension as syntax is to verbal comprehension."

The problem for everyone is, of course, that the modernist departure from tonality opened up a terrifying groundlessness in music. The breaking of the laws of the past left the art with an almost demonic freedom of possibility. By the end of World War II, when Webern had already demonstrated how far independent atonality might go in his silences and whispered phrases, the problem became fully manifest. The difficulty was not that music could *not* resist the tonal, as Bernstein says, but that it *could*—leading on the one hand to the total, rigidly mathematical organization of musical material in Messaien, Babbitt, and (at that time) Boulez, and on the other to the indulgence in total decontrol of John Cage and his followers. Thus in 1952 a pianist sat down to play Cage's *4'33"*, a piece in three movements, for any instrument, with the score marked TACET throughout—nearly five minutes of absolutely nothing. Other compositions followed, organized by the *I Ching*, or chance, with score markings indicating the performer's freedom in choosing instruments and sounds.

It is out of his fear of and opposition to such developments that Bernstein has been led to search for a grounding of music in nature, and particularly in tonality. While his reaction is understandable, however, it is also regressive. The future of music does not lie in the parodic tonal style of Stravinsky. His art was an art of his time. Our age must find its own. The problem for an authentic work no longer is the issue of tonality or atonality but the freedom and control of the new musical language, a control which neither outlaws tonality nor canonizes it.

But there is another reason that Bernstein places the limits of musical art so firmly at the tonal. It is part of his larger cultural project, to which these lectures are the most recent addition: the unification of popular and high culture. By rejecting the approach typified for him in atonality, Bernstein aims to overcome the "elite" character of contemporary music, just as forty years ago Hindemith had urged the reestablishment of *"Gebrauchsmusik"*—music for use, music for the people. In his own musical compositions, too, Bernstein tries to bridge the gap by grounding them in literary extra-musical associations. "I have a deep suspicion," he has said, "that every work I write, for whatever medium, is really theater music in some way." Indeed it is, from the *Age of Anxiety* symphony, to the film score for *On the Waterfront*, to *Candide* and *West Side Story*, to the *Kaddish* symphony and a composition like *Mass*.

BUT just as in *The Unanswered Question* he maneuvers ideas with occasional flashes of brilliance, and strives for effect in an eclectic pastiche of arguments, so one hears in his musical compositions beautiful moments mixed with cheap sentimentality, contemporary rhythms mixed with echoes of previous musical styles, and pictorial meaning conflicting with "intrinsic" intentions. The result, in his music as in his musical thought, is too often mere theatricality.

This very quality of theatricality, however, often serves him well as a conductor. Five years ago, in an interview, Bernstein confided, "I'm really a teacher. A closet rabbi. And it may be why I overconduct so often. Because I'm desperate to get my message across." And indeed, despite the occasional overuse of *vibrato* and forced *rubato*, Bernstein is very good at the grand crescendo, the passionate gesture; his recording of Wagner's Prelude to *Tristan and Isolde* in the Columbia lecture sets, for example, builds to a fine climax and is dramatic with the kind of fervor the music can withstand. He is also capable of an articulate, controlled theatricality that works well with the works of Stravinsky or with the Haydn symphonies.

But the theatrics and the underlining do not work well in these lectures. Bernstein's pedagogical musical analyses can be fine and illuminating, and the energy he communicates can be affecting, but overstatement and indulgent sloppiness are not conducive to theoretical clarity or to getting an intellectual "message" across, especially on such vexed questions as the nature of music and the dilemmas of the modernist revolution in art.

Movies

Altman, Chabrol, and Ray

William S. Pechter

THERE's a sense in which, had Robert Altman's new film been better, I probably would have liked it less. *Nashville* was "better": it dumped a truckload of city-slicker's scorn for "down-home" America at our doorstep, and yet covered its tracks so well that its enthusiasts were able to claim it was actually (if ambivalently) a celebration of the grit and fortitude of our vulgar country cousins. *Buffalo Bill and the Indians or Sitting Bull's History Lesson* comes equipped with no such cagey defenses. The American flag (which figured so promi-

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nently in the conclusion of *Nashville*) is raised, and from then on there's not a single shot that isn't bathed in the yellowish, "autumnal" light of decrepitude. (The film does, in fact, seem to have been photographed entirely through yellow filters.) Nor could one easily find two lines together without at least one of them smacking of some point of instruction in the film's own "history lesson." Once again, the doors are thrown open for Robert Altman, your genial host, to give another of his famous parties, but this time it's unmistakably a didactic moralizer who bursts out of the closet to greet you.

And what his lesson consists of is this. Buffalo Bill, prototype of "America's national hero," is a corrupt fraud (we're introduced to him haggling over commercial rights with an associate who assures him, "Everything historical is yours"). As "father of the new show business," Buffalo Bill purveys, via his Wild West show ("America's national family"), a fabricated image of his legendary prowess and derring-do in fighting Indians, palming off this pack of lies (on a receptive and gullible public) as the historical truth. ("The truth?" Buffalo Bill exclaims. "I'll tell you what the truth is! The truth is what gets the most applause.") But when the real Sitting Bull is signed on to enact a role in these charades, he throws a wrench in the myth-making machinery ("History"—i.e., white-man's "history"—"is nothing but disrespect for the dead," he declares), and demonstrates that, far from being the villainous savages that the show has depicted, Indians are actually beings far superior to their victors in nobility and wisdom, and mystically in touch with forces of nature and the realm of dreams. (Sitting Bull joins the show because he's had a dream that, through doing so, he'll meet and be able to make a request of the "Great Father"—Grover Cleveland—who, to everyone else's surprise, does come to see a performance, but, needless to say, flatly rejects the chief's request without even hearing him out.)

Indeed, the innate dignity of Sitting Bull is such that (much to Buffalo Bill's astonishment) the Indian is applauded even by the show's brainwashed audience, when, without any theatrical flamboyance, he merely rides into the arena. But, in the end, the show-business lies prevail. The real Sitting Bull returns to the reservation where he dies, and his place in the show is taken by his former interpreter, another Indian who demeaningly enacts a fictitious version of Sitting Bull's death at the hands of Buffalo Bill. And that such lies only meet the audience's need for them is clearly implicit. ("Is he sitting on that horse right?" an aging Buffalo Bill addresses a portrait of himself during a drunken reverie in which he imagines the dead chief present. "If he's not sitting it right, then how come all of you took him for a king?")

In any case, the show goes on; and, at the end, we see Sitting Bull "killed" by Buffalo Bill, the Indian-fighter's teeth flashing in a smile of manic glee and a look quite as mad as that of *Little Big Man*'s Custer in his eyes—they are, in fact, the perfect teeth and blue eyes of Paul Newman, as America's reigning star portrays its original one. Morever, the suggestion is plainly made that show business is only a metaphor for business as usual in America, past and present: that the lies of the Wild West show are continuous with those of the larger society. "Welcome to Buffalo Bill's Wild West," the show's manager greets Sitting Bull. "You'll find it ain't all that different from real life."

Such, then, is the history that the film expounds: the standard demonology of venal white devils trampling noble red men underfoot, envisioned as the paradigm of "America." ("God meant for me to be white," Buffalo Bill declares. "The difference between a white man and an Indian is that an Indian's red, and for a real good reason. So you can tell us apart.") To the general rule of white iniquity, the film offers only two exceptions: Annie Oakley, depicted as a sensitive, "artistic" woman exploited for profit by a manipulative husband (essentially, the Ronee Blakley role in *Nashville*), and Ned Buntline, the writer who "invented" Buffalo Bill, and who functions as a sententious chorus of one ("That's when the show business flourishes, when times is bad," etc.). But in a way, and especially given that a real historical injustice is tangled up with the film's simplistic recasting of bad cowboys against good Indians, it's the treatment of the Indians that is more objectionable. For the portrayal of the red man as Noble Savage is just another way of "not seeing" the Indian (despite his appropriation by radical chic, still the most invisible of America's minorities): of denying him his own identity to serve one's sloganeering. For all the usual Altman-film, revisionist air of seeing through conventional generic stereotypes, there's more real respect paid to Indians in the depiction of their unknowable otherness in such a conventionally "old-fashioned" Western as *Ulzana's Raid* than in all of *Buffalo Bill and the Indians*' facile idealization of them.

AND YET, repugnant as the new Altman film may sound when paraphrased on paper, its effect on the screen is, in fact, surprisingly benign, even, despite all its potential for hate-mongering, good-natured. Part of this affability seems attributable to the presence of Paul Newman, who may be a star, but is precisely the wrong kind of star—one indelibly associated with anti-heroic roles and liberal causes—to give the film that extra layer of irony which seems intended; for the film's conception (that of one manufactured image portraying another) to have bite, a John Wayne seems called for, though probably a younger John Wayne than the one now trading shamelessly on *his* "legend" in *The Shootist*. (The Wild West-Hollywood connection is pressed still further by the character of the show's producer, a figure given to such Goldwynisms as "futurable" and "disimproved," who at one point proclaims his intention to "Cody-fy" the world.) But more important, perhaps because the film's point-making is so emphatic and pervasive, and the points themselves so blunted by familiarity, one can more or less ignore such things (rather as one may automatically filter out the

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sound of surface noise in listening to some poorly recorded music) and direct one's attention elsewhere: in particular, to several deft comic touches, some nicely turned performances by a typically eccentric Altman cast (one of my favorite funny people, Pat McCormick, plays Grover Cleveland), and, above all, to the recurrent, densely textured scenes of the show people as they mill or rush about in a Saint Vitus's dance of incessant activity.

Indeed, these latter scenes seem virtually self-sufficient in their hold on one—seem almost to have a rooted life of their own quite apart from the shaky superstructure of statements erected on them. For if, on its surface, *Buffalo Bill and the Indians* is a collection of flimsy ironies about the fraudulent myth-making of American "history," there is also, as in the best of Altman's other films, something far more compelling at work beneath, much as a *McCabe & Mrs. Miller* is "about" capitalist rapacity, but draws its power from some more deeply buried source. *Buffalo Bill and the Indians* expounds its text, but, like Altman's other films, it also has a subtext—and though this new film is among Altman's least substantial ones, it's *McCabe & Mrs. Miller*, his deepest work, of which it most reminds me. (Never more so than when, like the whores in *McCabe & Mrs. Miller*, Sitting Bull stands in wonderment before a prototypical juke box—in which, however, he soon loses interest.) Like *McCabe & Mrs. Miller*, the work's emotional core seems to reside not so much in its action, in what happens, as in its evocation of the life of an isolated community at some outpost of civilization, with the Wild West show's compound resembling less a fairgrounds than a frontier fort. (Both films were, in fact, shot in relatively isolated conditions in Canada.) And though this community's population is composed, far more exclusively than *McCabe & Mrs. Miller*'s, of buffoons, it's remarkable that, even in the case of Buffalo Bill himself, the characters are no worse than buffoons, and rather gently drawn ones at that. And it's this sense of a communal outpost—of some isolated group banded together to create a refuge from the harshness of the world outside—that underlies almost all of Altman's best films, and radiates a warmth through them despite their overlay of cynical myth-debunking. One may even come to suspect that what these films are about is ultimately the experience of making them: about that fragile, transient, harmonious community that Altman gathers around himself for the making of his movies. And if his lesser work has the air of a convivial party, the best of it seems more like a celebration of some warmly felt gathering of family.

Yet if *Buffalo Bill and the Indians* is reminiscent of *McCabe & Mrs. Miller*, one is struck no less by the two films' dissimilarities. In *McCabe & Mrs. Miller*, a veneer of irony coats but ultimately doesn't conceal the resonant depth of feeling below; in *Buffalo Bill and the Indians*, a shallow substratum of feeling can intermittently be sensed beneath the top-heavy edifice of meanings on the surface. Nor is this just a case of one film running deeper than another in the way that any artist's work may vary in quality from one creation to the next. Rather, it seems increasingly likely that, with the extravagant overpraise that's been lavished on his work since *McCabe & Mrs. Miller*, Altman is now locked into the role of oracle, committed to telling us, in ever-widening arcs of indictment, that we're living a lie, and all our heroes have feet of clay. And the shame of that is really less that we're likely headed for other Altman films as thin as *Buffalo Bill and the Indians* (or, worse, more *Nashvilles*), than that we may never again be given an Altman film as rich, reverberant, and *mysterious* as *McCabe & Mrs. Miller*.

THAT I've been able to write about movies, on and off, for some fifteen years, and only once, in passing, mention the name of Claude Chabrol, is, I suppose, fair indication of the value I place on his work. Not that Chabrol, a director whose ability to turn out movies on a mass-production schedule has long since exceeded my ability to keep track of them, hasn't made some films I've enjoyed greatly (chiefly, the earlier, more flashily melodramatic ones, such as *The Cousins*, and, best of all, *Les Bonnes Femmes*). But he's also been responsible for some of the most excruciating hours I've ever experienced in a movie theater —I think particularly of the self-indulgent preciousness of *Landru*, and the pompous self-importance of *He Who Must Die*. (I might have added *La Rupture* to this list, but I left some ten minutes before it ended out of indifference and boredom.)

The die for Chabrol's career seemed cast with his first two films, *Le Beau Serge* and *The Cousins*, the second totally inverting the country-cousin/city-cousin values of the first, as though in frank admission that this director could as easily make a movie one way as another, just so he was making movies. And from then on, it's been movie-making alone that's provided the common thread in Chabrol's films as he's flitted ceaselessly from film to film and "period" to "period" in a parodic facsimile of an artist's evolution—from pulpy thrillers (*The Tiger Likes Fresh Blood*) and fancier ones (*Ten Days' Wonder*) to the ripped-from-the-tabloids political variety (*The Nada Gang*), and from elegantly ironic studies of provincial life and (in the nice title of one as-yet-unreleased example) the *"folies bourgeoises"* (*La Femme Infidèle*) to a work like *La Rupture*, so lifelessly posturing that his defenders have had to invoke alleged resemblances to Racine and Shakespeare to justify it. Though it's the films such as *La Femme Infidèle*, *Le Boucher*, and *Just Before Nightfall* that have won Chabrol such respect as he has in the American press, there seems to me something slightly anemic in their subdued refinement. When a director's films are able to rove with such chameleonlike ease from one subject (and style) to the next, so free of any commitment deeper than that to film-making itself, one may reasonably wonder if there isn't something fundamentally frivolous, even trashy, about the sensibility of their maker. And per-

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haps because there is, it's the more openly trashy Chabrol films that seem, finally, to have more life in them.

One virtue of such a director is that there's no predictability from one of his works to the next: a total failure can immediately be followed by a success. And *Une Partie de Plaisir* (dubiously translated as *A Piece of Pleasure*), the most recent (as I write) of Chabrol's films to be released here, seems to me one of the good Chabrols, shot with some forcefulness and played with a violent edge: another study of the bourgeoisie, but bound up this time with a jumble of feelings on the changing relations between the sexes. The story is neatly ironic: a man urges his (common-law) wife to intellectual "growth" by her taking lovers as he has, but finds himself not quite so free as he thought of "outmoded" jealousies when she does. Moreover, what she grows into isn't Baudelaire but Kahlil Gibran, until, in the end, she "outgrows" her husband as well; Pygmalion succeeds all right, but this Galatea isn't quite what he had in mind.

Up to this point, the film's elements are shrewdly managed, and, if the feelings it draws on seem confused, it's a confusion recognizably our own and of our times; and, at the least, the material seems genuinely felt in a way that little in recent Chabrol films has. (The film is written by Paul Gegauff, Chabrol's long-time collaborator, who has admittedly drawn for his material on his own marriage, and who, along with his own real wife, plays the lead.) The trouble is that, like the rest of us, Gegauff and Chabrol don't know where our current upheavals in the relations between the sexes are taking us, and so the film concludes with a reversion to what Chabrol and Gegauff (the writer Chabrol has described as his specialist in injecting violence) know best—the movies—with a tacked-on, brutal act of murder. Which is to say the film, not knowing how to conclude, simply stops. Still, I was in my seat and attentive when it ended, and not, as in the case of *La Rupture*, several blocks away and slipping into two-hours' worth of welcome amnesia.

IN THE best of worlds, I'd be writing every few months not on some new film by Robert Altman, but rather about the Indian director, Satyajit Ray, whose work I love. Ray is no less prolific than Altman (though he's no Chabrol), but the randomness of his films' exhibition in this country is such that, though I first saw his last-released work, *Distant Thunder*, several years ago, I've only now got to see it again when it's more or less disappeared from American theaters. That the film falls short of Ray's best work is probably true enough, and worth saying. No less worth saying, however briefly and belatedly, is that I've seen no other film this year or last which seems to me to approach it.

The film takes place in the midst of a man-made famine (the rice diverted to the troops) in a Bengali village during the early days of World War II. It is a famine in which millions died, but what the film is about is less this historical event as such than the transformations wrought by that famine on the lives of one couple. Characteristically, the principals aren't some neo-realist-style impoverished every-man-and-woman but a Brahmin teacher and his wife, accustomed by their caste to privilege, and taking deference as their due. It would have been easy to have made these characters, the man especially, more sympathetic—though such sympathy would be worth far less than that which the film elicits—just as it would have been easy to make the store owner who hoards his rice merely despicable, and not (as he is) less despicable than pathetic. And it would have been easy, also, to have set the film in some expressively ravaged and barren landscape rather than the film's verdantly beautiful one, and to have photographed it in stark black and white instead of sensuous color. But this is a film of *distant* thunder, in which the first words, said by the woman of some passing bombers, are, "How beautiful! Like a flight of cranes!"—a film about a world that's full of death, but a world in which death comes not with sudden violence so much as by stealth: stealing up on one in barely perceptible increments.

Distant Thunder has its faults. Though exquisitely delicate when it keeps to the intimate scale of the man and wife, it can be perfunctory and uninspired (montages of newspaper headlines) in sketching the larger social movements in the background; and the symbolic presence of a facially disfigured man who waits in the forest to trade rice for sexual favors seems, at times, an uncharacteristically easy and even callous stroke (though, finally, even this man seems more victim than predator). Moreover, the ending, with its leap into metaphor, verges on not working, though I found myself finally pulled along by its power. An old man, to whom the wife (to the husband's annoyance) had earlier given food and shelter, returns with all his dependents trailing behind him; and as the husband, now entered into the fraternity of the hungry, tells his wife to let them in, a title informs us of the horrifying size of the famine's death toll while the screen fills with the image of silhouetted, advancing masses. The effect is of the whole world suddenly crowding in. And by that time, the film's embrace has come to seem wide enough to receive it.

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After Kissinger

DIPLOMACY FOR A CROWDED WORLD: AN AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY. By GEORGE W. BALL. *Atlantic-Little, Brown. 356 pp. $12.95.*

Reviewed by JOSEPH SHATTAN

GEORGE BALL, who was Undersecretary of State under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson and is currently a partner in Lehman Brothers, brings what might be called a liberal businessman's perspective to the problems of foreign affairs. A staunch "Europeanist" (and former protegé of Jean Monnet), Ball feels that the industrial countries should strengthen their ties and concentrate on the really important matters—like expanding trade and promoting foreign investment—avoiding entanglement in the world's messier problems.

This point of view, though more characteristic of Republicans than of Democrats, is very much in the American grain, and it was intelligently presented by Ball in an earlier book, *The Discipline of Power.* But today the United States appears to be a country desperately in search of a moral purpose, and in his latest book Ball unfortunately has chosen to play the unlikely role of the enraged moralist. He is eloquent in his denunciation of our Vietnam policy, caustic in his analysis of our Middle East policy, and tough-minded in his discussion of détente. Upon closer examination, however, it turns out that for all his indignation, Ball's views are not all that different from those of former President Nixon and Secretary of State Kissinger, his two targets of criticism, and his polemical thrusts are often more revealing for what they leave out than for what they include.

To be sure, Ball's position on détente would seem to be very different from the Nixon-Kissinger position. He argues that under détente the Soviet Union has somewhat improved its manners but has altered neither its ideology nor its politics. He challenges the prevailing idea that the Politburo is split between hawks like the late Marshal Grechko and doves like General Secretary Brezhnev, and points out that, in the past, every alleged breakthrough in Soviet-American relations has been abruptly followed by a period of Soviet intransigence. To the Soviet Union, Ball explains, détente is a maneuver to lull the West into a mood of euphoria. The Soviet hope is that both the United States and Western Europe will significantly reduce their defense budgets, and that American troops will be induced to withdraw from the continent. Ball is sharply critical of Kissinger's "incessant talk of détente [which] has done far more to weaken Western will and solidarity than the *Ostpolitik.*"

Yet given his acute analysis of détente, Ball's advice to the United States on rearranging its relations with the Soviet Union is not only startling but almost inexplicable. "What is now called for," says Ball, "is a period of polite neglect—neither benign nor malign—while we urgently strengthen our relations with like-minded nations." In other words, although détente is simply a Soviet ploy to "undermine the West's concerted resistance to Soviet ideas and Soviet influence," even so we should "neglect" our Soviet adversary for the time being and rearrange our diplomatic priorities. Presumably, Ball would feel that the growing American alarm over the unprecedented Soviet arms buildup (which he does not discuss) and over the Soviet Union's increasingly adventurous foreign policy is also obsessive, an unwarranted relic of the cold war. One is thus left with the uneasy suspicion that the main reason Ball is against détente is that Nixon and Kissinger were for it.

In contrast to his discussion of détente, Ball's analysis of the Arab-Israeli conflict seems almost disingenuous. Thus, although it might seem impossible to discuss the origins of the Six-Day War of 1967 without mentioning Nasser's blockade of the Straits of Tiran—an action which, according to international law, constituted an act of war—Ball accomplishes the seemingly impossible. "With Nasser inviting a swelling number of Soviet 'advisers' with tanks, planes, ships, and rockets into Egypt," he writes, "Israel struck out in what she claimed to be a necessary protective action that extended her territorial hold all the way across the Sinai, over the Golan Heights, and into Old Jerusalem and the West Bank of the Jordan—where she dug in." Ball has his chronology wrong. The influx of huge numbers of Soviet "advisers" into Egypt came *after* the Six-Day War. Israel moved against Egypt because Nasser blockaded her southern port and swore her extinction, not because of a growing Soviet presence in Egypt. Ball's chronology is in the service of a tactic, however. By ignoring the initial Egyptian aggression, he can proceed to make the totally misleading claim that Israel's "continued occupation of territories taken by force" is contrary to "accepted principles of international law and the United Nations Charter. . . ."

ACCORDING to Ball, it is Israel's occupation of Arab territory that constitutes the fundamental obstacle to an Arab-Israeli settlement. "Experience in other situations has clearly shown," he writes, "that so long as the Israelis continued to hold the occupied territories, there could be no lasting peace in the Middle East. . . . Israel will be compelled to remain a garrison state so long as she continues to be an oc-

JOSEPH SHATTAN, *a doctoral candidate at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, has reviewed works on American foreign policy and Middle Eastern affairs for* COMMENTARY *and other periodicals.*

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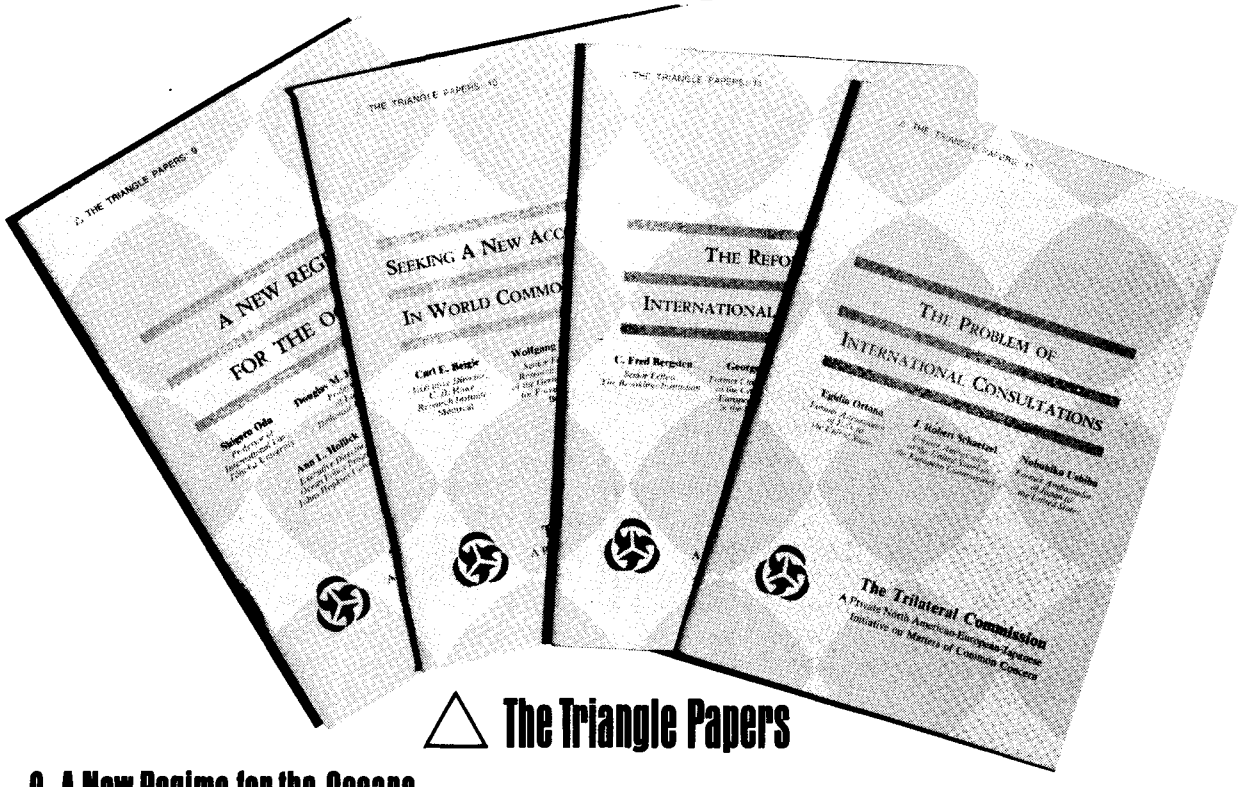

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cupying power." But the relevant question here, surely, is whether Israel will not be compelled to remain a "garrison state" even *after* it has ceased to be an occupying power. In 1967, in 1956, and in 1948 Israel was not occupying Arab territory, but this did not prevent the Arab blockade of the Straits of Tiran, the Arab use of the Sinai and the Gaza Strip as springboards for murderous terror-raids against the Israeli people, or the invasion of the fledgling Israeli state by five Arab armies; in light of these considerations it should be obvious that it is the Arabs' rejection of the legitimacy of the state of Israel, and not Israel's occupation of Arab territory, that lies at the heart of the dispute.

Since Ball believes that the fundamental issue is territorial, his advice is very simple: get Israel to withdraw from occupied Arab territory, and all will be well. He chastises the Johnson and Nixon administrations for eschewing "the tough initiatives required for progress," and he calls on the United States to declare itself in favor of Israel's withdrawal "to substantially the borders existing prior to the 1967 war." This is a simple reaffirmation of the Rogers plan, which was first broached in December 1969, yet, curiously, Ball refrains from even mentioning the Rogers plan, leaving the reader with the impression that he has advanced a daring and startling initiative. In fact, since the United States has never renounced the Rogers plan, Ball's bold proposal amounts to little more than a suggestion that the government reaffirm the principles it already adheres to.

Ball is a strong critic of Secretary of State Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy in the Middle East. He argues that the disengagement agreements achieved by Kissinger are "the work of a tactician, not a strategist," and he claims that Kissinger, unlike himself, has no overall concept of an Arab-Israeli settlement. This is simply not so. Like Ball, Kissinger subscribes to the fundamental tenets of the Rogers plan. Kissinger, however, also recognizes that the Israelis cannot simply be stampeded into going back to the 1967 armistice lines, but must be gradually cajoled, step by step.

There is one aspect of Ball's peace plan that might lay claim to a certain measure of originality. He calls on the United States and the Soviet Union jointly to impose a settlement on the Arabs and Israelis. Indeed, the desire to work alongside the Soviet Union in the Middle East appears to be an *idée fixe* with Ball. As early as 1969, he writes, it was "my fundamental conviction that a permanent peace was possible only by common action of the United States and the Soviet Union. The immediate parties to the conflict were, in my view, too consumed by suspicion, fear, passion, and too imprisoned by history to be able, by themselves, ever to reach an enduring agreement."

Ironically, one of the most cogent refutations of the whole idea of trying to solve large international problems through bilateral Soviet-American understandings was provided by none other than George Ball himself. Writing about the prospects of a general European settlement in *The Discipline of Power*, Ball noted that among some people, "particularly among the young and impatient," the idea of "a purely bilateral Soviet-American agreement, negotiated over the heads of the Europeans," seemed the most sensible way of ending the tangled legacy of World War II. But such an agreement, he warned, "could do little more than freeze the status quo, leaving the German question inflamed and unresolved, while creating resentment and instability throughout Europe at the insufferable arrogance of a European settlement 'dictated' by non-European powers." Similarly, a bilateral Soviet-American agreement negotiated over the heads of the Arabs and Israelis would do little more than restore the status quo *ante bellum*, which was itself highly unstable, would leave the whole question of Israel's legiti-

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macy unsettled, and would create resentment and instability throughout the area at the "arrogance of a . . . settlement 'dictated' by" non-Middle Eastern powers. The peoples of the Middle East, no less than the peoples of Europe, can only solve their own problems among themselves.

FINALLY, in view of Ball's evident hostility to Nixon and Kissinger, it is surprising that he has nothing to say about their failure to develop an effective policy vis-à-vis OPEC Pointing to our increasing dependence on Arab oil, Ball might well have asked whatever happened to "Project Independence," our grand design for energy self-sufficiency. His failure to do so is all the more striking since it is impossible to discuss intelligently the problems either of Western Europe or of Japan, as Ball tries to do, without considering OPEC policies. Ball does, however, berate Henry Kissinger for "maintaining a policy of confrontation toward the OPEC countries, denying them the chance to contribute to amelioration of financial distortions created by higher oil prices." Whatever he may mean by this—like the Western Europeans, Ball seems to favor a policy of appeasement toward OPEC—it does not make up for his neglect of the most alarming and potentially disastrous failure of the Nixon-Kissinger years.

Naderism

ME AND RALPH. By DAVID SANFORD. *New Republic Books. 135 pp. $7.95.*

Reviewed by ELLIOTT ABRAMS

THOSE WHO live by the media face the risk of dying by it, as Ralph Nader must by now be aware. After a running battle with Nader in the pages of the *New Republic,* David Sanford has written a pamphlet attacking Nader's life and works. Were Sanford's criticisms merely personal, few would pay them heed. His views, however, are not merely idiosyncratic, and many of his arrows hit home. For a man who demands purity from others, it appears that Nader has cut a lot of corners.

Sanford's argument is, in a sense, a petty one, based more on anecdote than on analysis. Some examples: Sanford says that Nader, despite his claim to live in puritan modesty in a tiny apartment, maintains an $80,000 home. Moreover, according to Sanford, Nader's attacks on the secrecy and lack of accountability of big business are offset by Nader's own secretive and deceptive practices concerning the sources and use of funds in his Public Citizen, Inc. Finally, Sanford tells us, Nader plays the stock market, and although he claims to donate more than 90 per cent of his $250,000 annual earnings to the

ELLIOTT ABRAMS *is a young lawyer who serves as special counsel to Senator Henry M. Jackson and who writes frequently on questions of social policy.*

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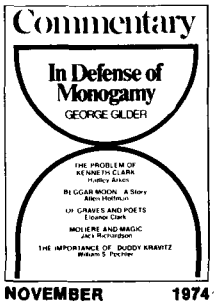

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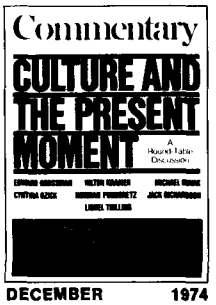

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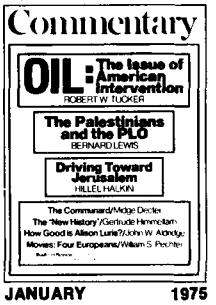

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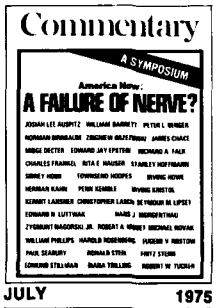

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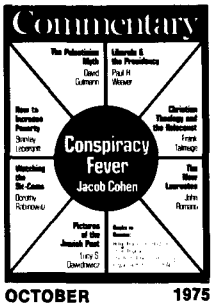

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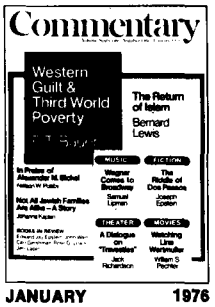

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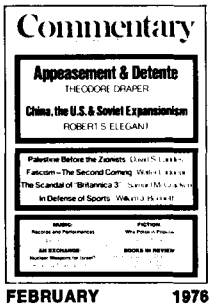

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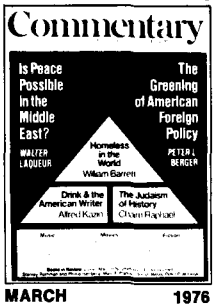
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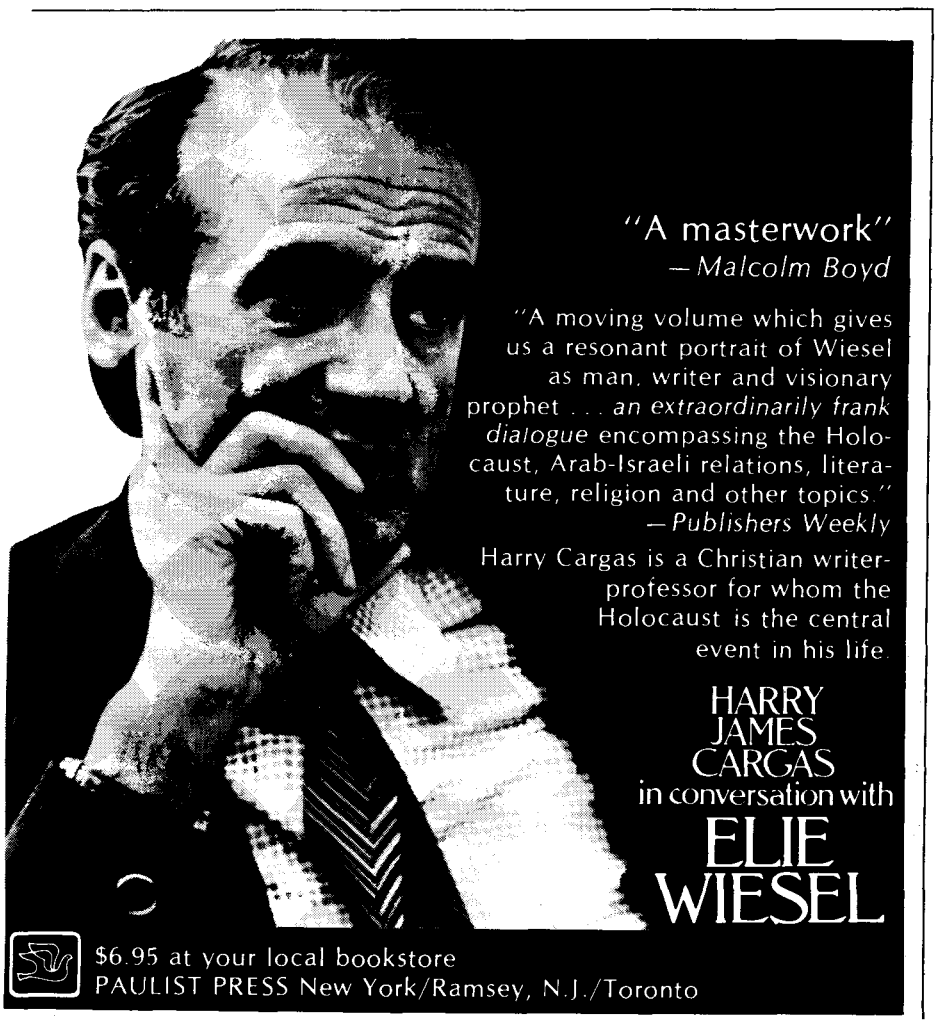
cause, has never shown that he really does so.

Sanford's anecdotes do, nevertheless, raise some serious questions about the Nader operation. Sanford calls Nader an "authoritarian" who "would, if he could, create a nation of zealots in his mold. . . ." In Nader's world, ends apparently justify means, for, as Sanford puts it, "Nader, over the years, has come to think that his views determine and are coterminous with the public interest." One of the most interesting examples of this tendency involves the financing of PIRG's, Public Interest Research Groups. These are essentially campus-based research and lobbying groups whose ties to Nader are usually close, though Sanford says Nader will stress or deny the relation as it suits his interests. Nader has wanted the PIRG's to be financed on a "Book of the Month Club"-type plan at participating colleges. This would mean that once a majority of students voted to establish a PIRG, *all* students would be assessed for a contribution, automatically. In order not to participate, individual students would have to take the initiative and later ask for a refund. As Sanford points out, a fairer system would be one allowing individual students to affiliate voluntarily, say by a simple checkoff on the term bill.

The issue is in part financial, for no one doubts that inertia will in the end govern. The "Book of the Month Club" plan would result in much more money for PIRG's than would the requirement that a PIRG actually convince students to support it by troubling to check a box and donate the needed $2 or so. However, the issue is also in part one of principle: Nader's plan opts for coercion over voluntarism. When the question actually arose at Pennsylvania State University, the trustees rejected the Nader plan on precisely this ground, while allowing the positive-checkoff plan. Nader in turn responded by calling Penn State "a citadel of fascism." The episode does not brighten the overall picture of Nader with which this book leaves the reader.

One of Nader's problems is that he is now a conglomerate. "His organization has become so large and diffuse and bureaucratic," Sanford says, in counting out twenty Nader operations, "that it resembles the divisions of General Motors. . . ." Justice Brandeis once accounted for the prestige of the Supreme Court by saying, "We do our own work." Nader can no longer do his, and quality has accordingly suffered. His report on each member of Congress, the "Congress Project," was compiled by student interns whose insights were, to put it charitably, neither brilliant nor original. In a recent issue of *Barron's*, the respected financial weekly, a critique of a Nader study calling for federal chartering of large corporations reported that the study is chock-full of misquotations, errors, and inaccurate footnotes.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BUT WHAT is most interesting about Nader is not his inaccuracies, or his double standards, or his self-righteousness. What is most interesting is his ideology. While *Me and Ralph* is filled with stories about Nader and his eccentricities, in the realm of ideas it is a disappointment. The one time Sanford comes close—aside from the story of the PIRG's—is in dealing with Nader's apparent coolness to no-fault insurance. Sanford reports that Nader's position on this major consumer issue is similar to that of the American Trial Lawyers Association. Now it is not surprising that trial lawyers oppose no-fault, for it costs them money. But why Nader? Sanford theorizes that Nader believes in a special role for trial lawyers: "The no-fault story implies that if Nader has an interest and a constituency after all it is the prosperity of attorneys, his new elite." He passes on the views of former Nader associate and *New Republic* associate editor, James Ridgeway, who he says thinks Nader believes in an "aristocracy of lawyers." A 1969 Ridgeway article is quoted, which concludes:

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Since the court has become the arena where the post-industrial economy is adjusted, every citizen needs a lawyer—not a legislature—to look after his interests. Perhaps this helps explain the keen interest by Ralph Nader and many other young lawyers in restructuring legal education, improving law schools, developing centers for the practice of law in the public interest, and so on. In reality, they are working toward a new definition of a governmental system, in which lawyers are a commanding elite. Nader's fundamental task is not so much to protect consumers as it is to organize his own constituency, the legal profession, for the assumption of power in a post-industrial society.

It is a pity that Sanford lets this issue drop, for it leads to the central question about Nader. Does he, for instance, object to growing corporate power because large centers of power tend, *per se*, to reduce the autonomy of individual citizens, or does he simply object to the way the power is being used, and wish that Nader's Raiders held it rather than GM? Does he want to see big government reduced in size and power, or does he merely want Congress and the Executive to cede some power to the judicial branch, the branch most susceptible of influence by Nader's bright young activist lawyers?

Nader's decision to conduct a major fight over the federal chartering of corporations helps to clarify such questions, for "federal chartering" is a method of shifting power from private corporations to public officials. Who will these officials be? The conclusion generated by *Me and Ralph* is that Nader and his boys know the answer: they have seen the future and it's them. It is they who, acting in the "public interest," will charter corporations, regulate business activity, and tell us what kind of cars to buy.

Nader, Sanford writes, has "a keen and certain sense of how life should be lived, business practiced, and laws written." Sanford's conclusion—that Nader is an "authoritarian"—may be dismissed as psychology, but it is not so easily disposed of as politics. Nader has been represented, by himself and others, as a staunch opponent of the restraints which big government and big business place on individual freedom. Sanford paints the portrait of a man confident of his ability to know what is good for others and willing to exercise power to enforce his views. What, then, *is* "Naderism"? Is it an effort to atomize power, or merely to capture it? Does Nader seek to discipline business through the pressure of the free market, or to control it through the federal government? These are the questions that hover over the pages of Sanford's too-brief book, and that still need to be answered.

Sports as Transcendence

THE JOY OF SPORTS: END ZONES, BASES, BASKETS, BALLS, AND THE CONSECRATION OF THE AMERICAN SPIRIT. By MICHAEL NOVAK. *Basic Books. 357 pp. $10.95.*

Reviewed by WILLIAM J. BENNETT

IN his latest book, *The Joy of Sports*, Michael Novak—theologian, political commentator, spokesman for the new ethnicity—attempts an especially difficult task: to do nothing less than become the definitive advocate of sports and sports fans. His reasons for writing this book are in part personal—"To linger over a book on sports is, for a philosopher, almost too much pleasure; for a theologian, sinful. But delicious"—and in part ideological—"All around this land there is a faith without an explanation, a love without a rationale. This book is written to fill a void among the faithful."

Novak maintains that "Sports is, somehow, a religion." Like religion, sports is built on cult and ceremony; on *ascesis*; on a notion of fate. Sports embodies "the almost nameless dreads" which religions make explicit. For Novak, the symbols and arcana of sports are themselves explicable in religious termi-

WILLLIAM J. BENNETT, *who contributed "In Defense of Sports" to our February number, is assistant director of the National Humanities Center in North Carolina.*

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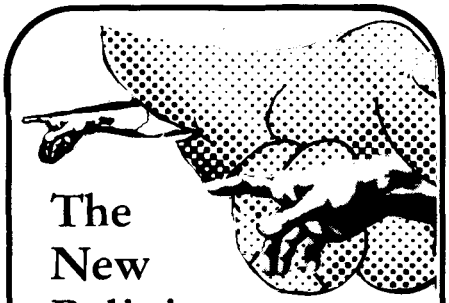

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nology and religious imagery. Thus, "Seven seals lock the inner life of sports." These seals are sacred space (stadia, for example); sacred time ("the time of the heroes in sports are tokens of eternal life"); the bond of brothers ("the contests of sports . . . are eucharists"); rooting; *agon*, or inspired struggle; competing ("some people, one-sidedly Protestant in temperament, approach sports as a means to an end"); and self-discovery ("when desire and event thus meet as one, there is a harmony in the self rarely sounded, a chord, a melody, for which one cannot always find the notes. The music when one finds them is ineffable").

Novak concedes that sports is "not the highest form of religion . . . and Jews, Christians, and others will want to put sports in *second place*" (emphasis added), but "when human beings actually accomplish [victory in sports], it is for me as if the intentions of the Creator were suddenly limpid before our eyes: as though into the fiery heart of the Creator we had momentary insight." Or again: "He who has not drunk deep of the virtues of football has missed one of the closest brushes with transcendence that humans are allowed." Playing sports thus gives a glimpse of eternity, "a foretaste of the eschaton," an opportunity to break the ordinary bonds of mortality. Non-believers, and those who absent themselves entirely from sports, seem to Novak a "danger to civilization." In fact, he says he has never met a person who disliked sports who did not seem to him "deficient in humanity."

Not surprisingly, in view of all this, the world of ordinary human life, of work and the commonplace, is devalued by Novak in comparison with the transcendent realm of sports. Because sports is "the real thing," "play, not work, is the end of life." Work is an opiate, a substitute, "the diversion necessary for play to survive." Nor does Novak shrink from the inference that the attention and energy of mortals should be redirected: "To participate in the rites of play is to dwell in the Kingdom of Ends. To participate in work, career, and the making of history is to labor in the Kingdom of Means." According to Novak, economic crises, nations, and elections come and go, but sports remains "the basic reality." Besides sports, "work, politics, and history are the illusory, misleading, false world." "Let the world burn, these realities endure."

In addition to elaborating upon the thesis I have been quoting from, Novak provides the reader with "Sportsreels"—portraits and flashbacks of heroics in sports—and odds-and-ends observations tied more or less to his central theme, such as the cultural, ethnic, and regional contexts of different sports. But present on every page of this book is Novak the lover-celebrant of sports. The reader is constantly reminded that Novak himself is a "jock," of the world of jocks, and that his involvement in his subject is total.

The Joy of Sports has descriptive passages that capture well the *feeling* of sports playing and sports watching, but the book lacks the measure, restraint, and control that typify the good playing and watching of sports. Novak is a commentator of enormous ability and insight, but from time to time he becomes excessive and self-indulgent. Novak himself offers a model for the kind of informed and sympathetic writing about sports that is appropriate to the subject by reprinting the sportscaster Vince Scully's play-by-play commentary on Sandy Koufax's fourth no-hitter and first perfect game in 1965. In the passage Novak quotes, Scully succeeds in combining an obvious enthusiasm for what he is observing, a cherishing of detail and texture, with control and restraint, the self-limitation that is the mark of mastery. Scully is involved in the game but does not misname or exaggerate it or lose sight of his own or the game's mortal dimension. He is among the best of announcers because his accuracy, clarity, and precision serve to highlight the texture of the important small things that make up the game; he is concerned for measure.

In a recent issue of *Harper's*, Novak wrote of the dangers that lurk in certain illusory promises of

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liberation, which he called "the great escape":

> There is a pervasive tendency in Western thought, possibly the most profound cultural undercurrent in 3,000 years . . . in which liberation is imagined as a breaking of the bonds of fitness. Salvation comes as liberty of spirit. "Don't fence me in!" . . . One tries to live as angels once were believed to live—soaring, free, unencumbered.
>
> The jading of everyday, the routines of weekdays and weekends, the endless round of humble constraints, are, in this view, the enemies of human liberty.

He goes on in the article, which is called "The Family Out of Favor," to argue against this view and for the happiness to be found in the "endless round of humble constraints" that make up the everyday. To which one wishes to add: just so. We resist jading and fight the absurd by involvement in many things, including involvement in sports. But in sports, as in family life, we gratefully find not the cosmic but relief from the cosmic. In the presence of the commonplace—that which is good and enjoyable in its own limited terms and dimensions—the last thing we need is an infusion of Transcendence.

Religion and Society

THE SECULARIZATION OF THE EUROPEAN MIND IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY. By OWEN CHADWICK. *Cambridge University Press. 286 pp. $18.95.*

Reviewed by
GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB

AT THE height of his campaign against Christianity, Voltaire took to concluding his letters with the motto, *"Ecrasez l'infâme,"* often abbreviated as *"Ecr. linf."* Sometimes this salutation stood in place of a signature, which led one censor to observe (so it is reported)

GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB *is professor of history at the City University of New New York. Her most recent book is* On Liberty and Liberalism: The Case of John Stuart Mill.

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that "M. Ecrlinf doesn't write badly." Historians debate whether the infamy to be destroyed was Christianity in particular or religion in general. But there is little doubt that much of the passion of the Enlightenment was directed against the one or the other—and against both, to the extent to which they were identified with each other.

AFTER the strenuous efforts of the Enlightenment—and of the French Revolution too, which did what it could to destroy the Catholic Church—it is extraordinary to find religion remaining a paramount issue throughout the 19th century and even into the 20th. Generation after generation confronted the same questions and fought the same battles. Great men came and went —Marx, Darwin, Nietzsche, Freud. Scientists and philosophers, secularists and laicists, agnostics and atheists entered the lists. The sentence of death was pronounced again and again: man was de-alienated, nature was de-teleologized, God was declared dead. But somehow man resisted deification and God refused to become mortal. A latter-day atheist, witnessing the recent upsurge of religiosity—of faiths old and new, Western and Eastern, traditional and syncretistic—can only take refuge in another *mot* of Voltaire: "If God did not exist, man would have to invent him."

It is this fascinating history that is the subject of Owen Chadwick's book, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century*. The title does the book a grave injustice. A carping critic could tear it to bits—"secularization," as if that abstraction could describe the complicated and often contradictory forces at work; "the European mind," as if there were any single "mind" characteristic of any one group in any one country, let alone Europe as a whole; even the "nineteenth century," as if the story could be contained within that artificial convention of chronology. What is interesting about the book is precisely the extent to which it defies the simplicities of its title. Chadwick, Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge, is best known for his two-volume work, *The Victorian Church*. That was a solid and comprehensive work of scholarship—definitive, one might say, if that word can still be used in an age of unremitting "revisionism." But the present book is something else, not especially systematic (the quantitative historian would have little patience with it), still less comprehensive, but suggestive, imaginative, and provocative.

Among the other flaws of the title is the implication that "secularization," such as it is, is simply a product of "mind." In fact, the first half of the book is devoted to "the social problem," the social conditions that encouraged, and in some instances deterred, the process of secularization. Indeed, the term "secularization" is intended to shift the focus from the intellectual to the social, from the concept of "enlightenment" favored by the traditional intellectual historian to that of "secularization" as sociologists understand it. What Chadwick is interested in, like Durkheim and Weber—and St. Simon and Comte before them—is the relation between society and religion. Like them he begins with the axiom, "religion is a social phenomenon," an intrinsic part of the values, beliefs, institutions, and practices that determine the character of a society. In this sense, secularization in the 19th century was a product of liberalism and industrialism, of the free marketplace which provided a free market for opinions as much as for goods, of a popular press which inevitably magnified the profane rather than the sacred, of anticlericalism and laicism which derived more from a political struggle with the Catholic Church than from any ideology or theology, and above all of the industrialism and urbanism that were the dominant features of what we now call a "modernizing" society.

There is no doubt of the general secularist tendency of the age. The villager coming into the town was deprived of his community, of his intimate association with place, people, nature—all those relationships that fostered a sense of providence. In the town, he lived an anonymous, mechanical, unnatural life, drawing water from a tap in-

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stead of a spring, inhabiting one of a row of identical houses, tending a machine as if he were himself a machine, and having little awareness of those aspects of nature that, in the country, suggested an omnipresent and omnipotent God. The correlation between urbanism and secularism, Chadwick assures us, is statistically demonstrable: the larger the town, the smaller the percentage of churchgoers.

But Chadwick also reminds us of other statistics and correlations that complicate the picture. The second quarter of the century witnessed not only a rapid movement of population from country to town but also, in many countries, a revival of religion. Moreover the country dwellers were not uniformly more religious than townsmen; indeed, flourishing secularist groups existed in very small villages. Some statistics suggest a correlation between the new towns, rather than towns as such, and the decline of religion; others point to specific occupations rather than the size of the community. Some of the decline of church attendance among the urban working classes may be attributed to the paucity of churches in the towns rather than a diminution of religious sentiment. And among the upper classes religion was often the motive for secularization itself: practicing and believing Christians deliberately supported, even initiated, movements for the repeal of blasphemy laws, religious oaths, and the like, in the hope that by making the state more secular, society would become more Christian —more moral, more just, and more genuinely, inwardly pious. The relations of liberals and Catholics were similarly paradoxical. Precisely at a time when liberals, in violation of their own principles, were seeking to curb the freedom of the Catholic Church (because they took it to be a threat to the liberal secular state), the Church started to invoke liberal principles in its own defense—thus itself contributing to the process of secularization.

CHADWICK quotes Talcott Parsons who said of Durkheim that he came close to inverting the axiom, "Religion is a social phenomenon," to make it read, "Society is a religious phenomenon." Chadwick himself seems to lean to the second proposition. His discussion of liberalism includes an analysis of J. S. Mill's *On Liberty* which focuses upon its central tenet:

> The only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant. He cannot rightfully be compelled to do or forbear because it will be better for him to do so, because it will make him happier, because, in the opinion of others, to do so would be wise, or even right.

"No right," Chadwick asks, "to exercise power to moral ends? Is not the state based upon the moral health of its citizens?" No, answers

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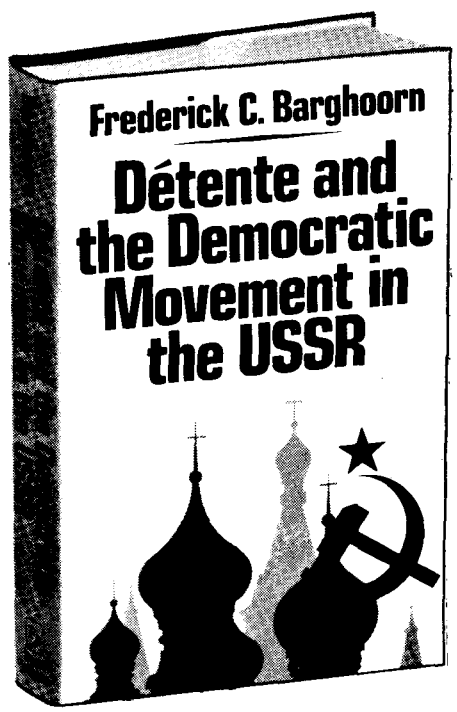

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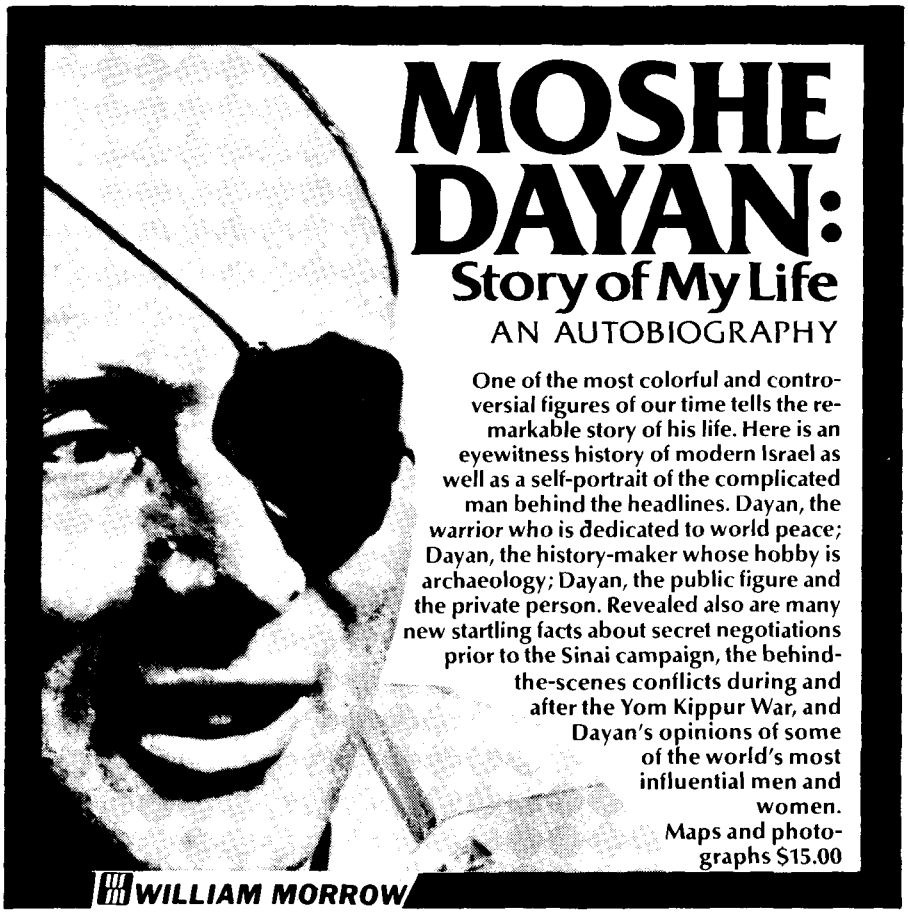
On Liberty, except for children and societies in a state of "nonage," the state has no such right or power. Chadwick believes this to be the essential message and import of *On Liberty:* in asserting freedom as the only end and responsibility of the state, in making the individual sovereign and his conscience the supreme authority, *On Liberty* served as the "first modern exposition of a theory of the secular state." His own attitude to this theory is equally clear: "No society could put into practice all the principles of this great essay and remain a society." "No man is an island," he reminds us; "man is a moral being because he is a social being."

Chadwick takes Mill's essay seriously. He analyzes it seriously, responds to it seriously, and above all recognizes the serious social consequences of the theory it embodies. He takes it, in fact, as the testament of modern liberalism. In doing so, however, he departs from his avowed intention of examining his subject sociologically rather than intellectually, as a process of "secularization" rather than "enlightenment." One begins to suspect (from his discussion of Marx as well as Mill) that he is animated less by a preference for the sociological approach than by a distaste for the concept of "enlightenment." And his distaste for that concept comes less from its roots in intellectual history, with the implicit premise of the primacy of ideas, than from its blatant bias—the assumption that it is more "enlightened" to be irreligious than religious, that the struggle between irreligion and religion was a battle between the forces of light and of darkness. By shifting the argument to the social realm, by making secularization a consequence of the way men lived rather than of the way they thought—or by making the way they thought a consequence of the way they lived—Chadwick rescues the intellect itself from any necessary disposition to irreligion. Intellect, mind, reason, the progress of thought, truth itself, are not necessarily inherently antithetical to religion. This is no conscious part of his strategy, or at least it does not appear thus in his book. But it is the effect of his argument.

The "mind" in the title may not, after all, be as much a misnomer as it seems. The fact is that much of Chadwick's book—of the first part on "The Social Problem" as well as the second on "The Intellectual Problem"—is concerned with mind. And he treats mind not as the "reflection" or "superstructure" of society, but as a force in itself, not always a decisive or determining force but a relevant, potent, and always interesting one. It is revealing, for example, that although Chadwick places his discussion of both Mill and Marx in the first part of his book, he subjects them to the kind of intellectual analysis appropriate to intellectual phenomena. If Marx himself sought, like Feuerbach before him, to "stand Hegel on his head," to de-alienate man by de-idealizing and de-spiritualizing him, and, going beyond Feuerbach, by thoroughly socializing and materializing him, all this was preeminently an intellectual enterprise. Marx's intention, to be sure, was social; it was nothing less than to bring about a social revolution of the most radical kind, a revolution that would transform all social relations and ultimately human nature itself. To accomplish this he had to eradicate religion as totally as Voltaire had to eradicate Christianity, although for quite different reasons. But whatever his purposes, Marx belongs to intellectual history as much as Voltaire—an intellectual history that had, like all such history, profoundly important social consequences even when it was most profoundly, as Chadwick recognizes, "anti-intellectual."

"In a word, I hate all the gods"—in the preface to his dissertation Marx quoted those celebrated words of Prometheus. Thirty years later a Marxist journal edited by Bebel and Liebknecht was still fighting the same battle: "With the last Christian the last slave shall be free." But the enemy was never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merely Christianity. It was religion that was the "opium of the people," and, for Marx, it was Judaism that was even more odious than Christianity, Judaism representing the essence of capitalism as well as of religion. If Marx spoke less of religion in his later works than in his earlier ones, it was not because he was any less opposed to religion. The "criticism of religion" remained the "premise of all criticism"—that is, of all criticism of society—but that premise, he was confident, had already been amply demonstrated; what was necessary was to work out its social implications and to apply it in practice.

Chadwick grants that the "old Marxism" was atheistic. But he raises the possibility that the "new Marxism" of later generations was compatible with religion, that it could, and did, engage in a genuine "dialogue with religious men," and that therefore atheism was "no necessary part of a Communist theory of society." In this sense, Chadwick suggests, Marxism is not "necessarily," "essentially" atheistic; it is only "accidentally" so, only by virtue of the accident that Marx and Engels happened, in their "private views," to be so. The suggestion sounds faintly ingenuous coming from so sophisticated a historian, and it is all the more strange because it depends on an uncharacteristic vagueness and confusion of categories: "Marxism" ("old" and "new"), "socialism," "the working-class movement," and "the workingman" are used almost interchangeably. Chadwick quotes Trotsky to the effect that the true revolutionary must annihilate in himself every barrier to revolutionary activity, whether that barrier lies in religion, morality, or legality. "Therefore," Trotsky announced, "we regard atheism, which is part of materialism, as an indispensable constituent of the revolutionary education of a terrorist." Chadwick hastens to add: "No one must attribute this attitude to the ordinary workingman of the 19th century." But surely no one does, for the simple reason that no one takes the ordinary workingman to be a Trotskyist, terriorist, revolutionary, Marxist—or even a socialist.

If Chadwick plays down the drama of Marxist atheism by introducing such undramatic and un-Marxist elements as the "ordinary workingman," he also makes too little of the dramatic tension within Marxism itself, the peculiar dialectic by which its atheism became something very like a religion. When one speaks of the religious quality of Marxism, one need not mean it in the trivial sense in which any ideology may evoke a passion and fanaticism commonly associated with a religious creed. What is meant is the striking extent to which Marxism reproduces the Christian schema of sin and salvation, alienation and redemption, apocalypse and eschatology, messianism and utopianism, the repudiation of false gods and the worship of the one true god (the "man-god," as Dostoevsky described it). Chadwick is perfectly aware of this reading of Marxism, but he has little patience with it. Atheism is atheism, he insists, in good, English, no-nonsense fashion. If he partially absolves Marxism—or the "new Marxism"—of the charge of atheism, it is because he thinks he has empirical reason for doing so (in the history of secular societies, working-class movements, and social-democratic parties). The kinds of metaphysical affinities that impress others do not much impress him. He does not, perhaps, take sufficiently to heart the advice of Renan (which he himself quotes), that you should never believe a German when he tells you he is an atheist.

It may be that the only German of the century who can legitimately lay claim to the title of atheist, who can be believed when he calls himself that, is Nietzsche. But except for a few passing references, Nietzsche is conspicuously absent from this account. One waits in vain for the appearance of the most exciting thinker of the century, one who is absolutely central to the theme of this book, especially to

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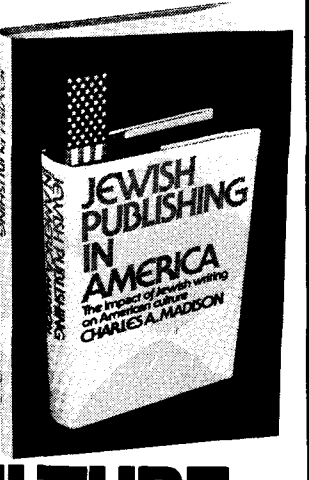

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the chapters on "History and the Secular" and "The Moral Nature of Man." The protagonists of the first of these chapters are Kingsley, Michelet, Taine, and Renan; of the second, Comte, Ferdinand Brunetière, and Eugene de Vogüé. One does not begrudge them a part in this story—but surely not at the expense of Nietzsche. Again, it is perhaps Chadwick's "Englishness" that accounts for this curious lacuna at the heart of his book. He can cross the channel to visit with the French, and some notably second-rate Frenchmen among them. But he is uncomfortable with the apocalyptic, intransigent mind of Nietzsche, which was utterly subversive of the "priestly system of valuations" and which professed a "transvaluation of all values" so revolutionary as to make all other revolutions, including that of Marx, seem bland and innocuous.

If the book lacks this dramatic element, it contains something which is almost as valuable—a personal tone and frame of reference that give it an authenticity all too rare in books of this kind. The personal tone is easily accounted for by the fact that it originated in a series of lectures, the Gifford Lectures delivered at the University of Edinburgh in 1973-74. Like many Englishmen, Chadwick is elegant, witty, urbane. But unlike others, he does not use these qualities as substitutes for mind and thought; on the contrary, they are always at the service of his ideas, giving them point and precision. And when he speaks in the first person, citing a personal opinion or experience, he never does so intrusively or assertively. At one point, for example, he recalls the most miserable day of his life, a day spent at the scene of a fire at which over fifty people lost their lives. Returning home, with the vivid sight of scorched flesh, corpses, anguished relatives still before his eyes, he picked up the Bible and read—"reluctantly," as he says—the lesson for the day, which happened to be uncannily appropriate and which had the effect of a kind of illumination. The episode appears in the concluding chapter, "On a Sense of Providence," and perfectly illustrates the coexistence, throughout the century, of secularization and religious faith, the decline of a sense of providence among large groups of people, and at the same time the persistence of belief among those who "knew what they knew." Perhaps it is because Chadwick knows what he knows that he can respond so sensitively to both aspects of the *Zeitgeist*.

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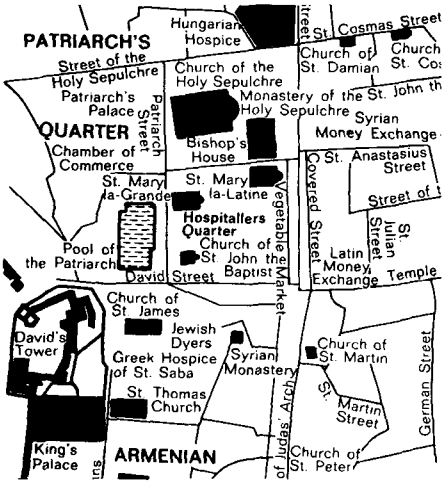

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The Pen & the Sword

TRUTH IS FOR STRANGERS. By EFRAIM SEVELA. Translated by Antonina W. BOUIS. *Doubleday. 209 pp. $6.95.*

A HERO IN HIS TIME. By ARTHUR A. COHEN. *Random House. 278 pp. $8.95.*

Reviewed by RUTH R. WISSE

The Russian author who does not want to write to the state's direction has assumed the nightmarish status of an underground writer, that is to say, from the state's point of view he has chosen a life of crime. . . . Literature has become a forbidden, risky, and thus all the more fascinating activity.

—Andrei Sinyavsky

THE Soviet Union may have lost its appeal to the political imagination, but something in its cultural life continues to compel the attention. For the non-totalitarian West, where censorship is obsolete, and art suffers more from overindulgence than it does from adversity, the cultural stage of the Soviet Union offers rare ingredients for an old-fashioned morality play. There good and evil, in the form of artist and state, face off in recognizable, unambiguous terms. The possibilities of heroism are rekindled as the

RUTH R. WISSE *is the author of* The Schlemiel as Modern Hero *(Chicago) and* A Shtetl and Other Yiddish Novellas *(Behrman). Mrs. Wisse teaches Yiddish literature at McGill University in Montreal.*

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pen, in classic fashion, goes into battle against the sword. Small wonder that the Russian writer has become an object of fascination, and even a literary subject. Two recent novels about Soviet poets, one by a Russian Jewish emigrant to Israel, Efraim Sevela, the other by an American Jewish intellectual, Arthur A. Cohen, make different use of this subject's inherent power.

Truth is for Strangers, Sevela's first novel, and by far the simpler of the two books, is the fictional account of a train ride in the life of Algirdas Pozera, a famous Lithuanian poet, once a fervent Communist and now a middle-aged party faithful, who is returning home from Moscow to Vilnius. Pozera's journey, beginning with his inability to secure the usual "soft-class tickets," jolts him out of his normal complacency: first there is an encounter with an intelligent American Lithuanian on a ladies' tour to the homeland, whose questions, though they elicit from him the standard rehearsed replies, nevertheless touch off a harsh series of memories; then he must share his compartment with a sixteen-year-old girl who has been arrested for theft, and with her two police escorts. Inspired by the girl's plight, the poet resolves to break with his comfortable role and to attempt a daring rescue of her and of his own faltering talent. As it turns out, the rescue—enacted in forty-four pages—is merely a lower-berth dream, or nightmare. Actually, Pozera has reached the point of no return. He alights at his proper station and takes delight in his escape—from heroism.

The book's forceful descriptions of the Communist takeover in Lithuania after World War II make it part of the new literature of disclosure. Its narrative energy derives from the revelation of that bloody "truth" which the protagonist, Pozera, conceals at a growing cost to his peace of mind and his work. Yet the story of a poet surviving a crisis of conscience is an all-too-obvious frame for Pozera's repressed memories—memories of the crazed battle between the Forest Brotherhood of Lithuanian nationalists and the Communists; of the many victims on both sides; and of the disillusioning aftermath of "pacification." Unfortunately, the artificial structure of the book affects its credibility. Pozera is believable but not convincing, and the recounted events of his life, for all their anecdotal impact, do not add up to a realized literary character. Sevela is somewhat more successful in the short forms of his previous collection, *Legends from Invalid Street,** where his skill as a raconteur is unconstrained by the sustaining demands of a novel.

ARTHUR A. COHEN'S novel, *A Hero in His Time*—about a contemporary Russian Jewish poet who is delegated by the Soviet authorities to attend an International Congress in New York—is politically and artistically a more com-

* Translated by Anthony Kahn, Doubleday, 1974.

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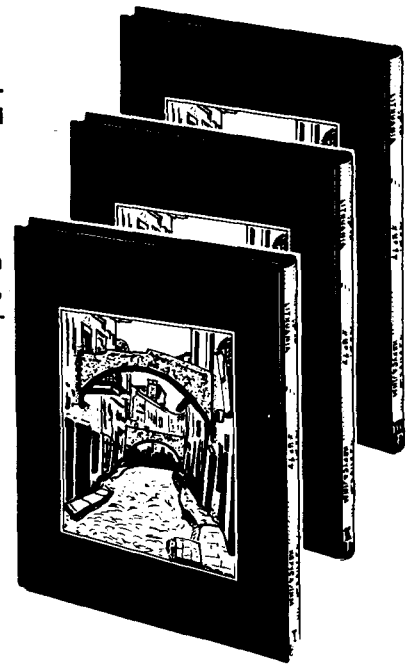

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plex work. The book is concerned not merely with the power of the artist to thwart the evil, mendacious state, but with the poet's ancient obligation, made more difficult but not impossible in modern times, to keep his ear to the ground, "even to the underground, where we can hear God singing stories." Cohen has long been a writer in search of a hero, or of the heroic; that search was brought perhaps to its highest pitch in his previous novel, a myth of messianic immanence, *In the Days of Simon Stern* (1973). Now it takes a political form, in a novel where poetry, taking the place of religious faith, becomes that which denies allegiance to anything less than itself.

The novel opens in Moscow. Yuri Maximovich Isakovsky, a poet of small, tight output, employed as editor of a Soviet quarterly of folk music, *The People's Voice*, is unexpectedly to be sent as a delegate to the International Congress of Music and Ethnology in New York. The trip assumes a sinister aspect when Isakovsky is ordered to transmit, as his own, a phony poem, which is actually a computer message in code. He is accompanied on the trip by a personal spy, Vovka Bedkin; a KGB official, Chupkov; and a professional Soviet poet, his former friend Ilia Kolokolov—their presence is intended to insure Isakovsky's compliance and good behavior. Nevertheless, Isakovsky manages some independence. He succumbs to an attractive American journalist, Greta Engel (like him, a Jew), and takes the musicologists by surprise with a religious interpretation of the sources of art. He also betrays his mission, reworking the KGB message into an authentic poem of his own before handing it over to the American agent. But whereas the slimy Vovka Bedkin takes the occasion of this trip to defect to the West, Yuri finally does not. When the time comes, and despite Greta's entreaties, he boards the Aeroflot flight back to Russia. "He contemplated the future, prepared, perhaps for the first time, to invest its trial with the kind of tenacity often mistaken for heroism." Here the book ends.

Isakovsky draws his literary inspiration from the martyred Soviet

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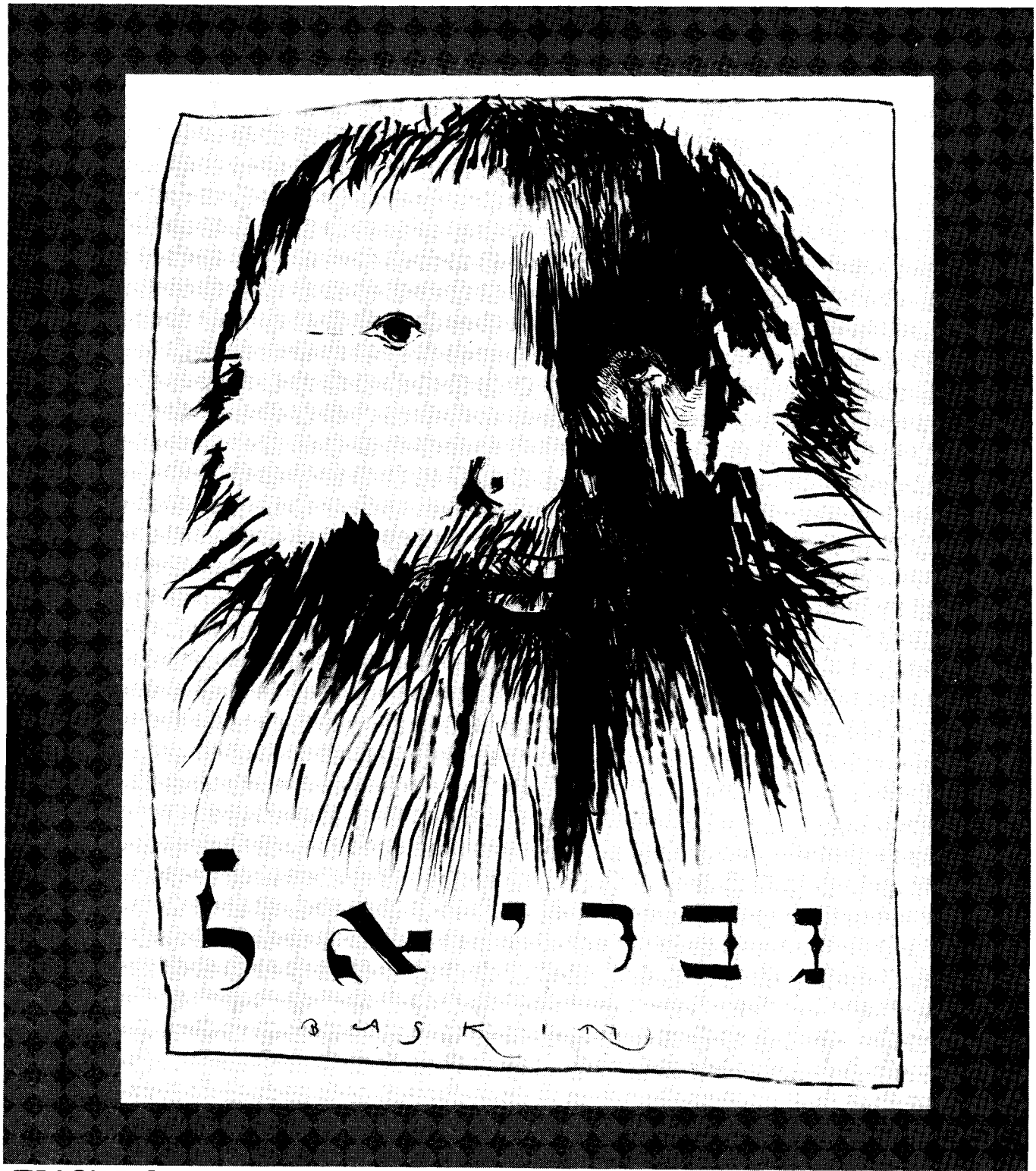

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poet Osip Mandelstam, and thus stands in opposition to that officially-sanctioned Soviet poetry —"a fife and drum corps to the people"—which is represented in the novel by his negative counterpart, the Yevtushenko-style orator, Ilia Alexandrovich Kolokolov (not a Jew). The book's harshest pronouncement on this literary type comes when Kolokolov, who is lionized in New York as he is in his homeland, appears at a dinner in his honor and reads to the assembled American writers and intellectuals a poem about American atrocities in Vietnam composed of the same images he had once used in a *samizdat* poem on the entry of Russian troops into Budapest. The authorship of the earlier poem Kolokolov has since denied.

As for the distinguished Americans, the dinner offers Cohen an occasion to debunk them as well. Fashionable liberals with no commitment to anything beyond their self-importance, nor any understanding of totalitarian regimes, they make the predictable comparisons between an America where poetry is considered "silly and useless" and a Soviet Union where poetry has the power to "make a dent." Set against Isakovsky's informed personal commentary on the artistic process in his native land, these views are exposed as irresponsibly naive. For Isakovsky, who is Cohen's mouthpiece, the practice of literature is rather a kind of *halakhah*, a rigorously humanizing daily ritual, sufficiently demanding and absorbing to insulate the artist from his destructive environment, with creative opportunities for survival and even exaltation. This theme is reinforced by the major presence in the novel of a minor figure, a folk-song collector named Tyutychev, who returns spiritually intact from his internment in the labor camps because his pious routine of eliciting and memorizing the folk songs of his fellow prisoners has kept him uncontaminated. The book also offers an interpretation of the artist as Jew, suspected, as the Jew often is, of disloyalty, obsessed with the Jew's "rage for simple justice," significant and insignificant in the life of the culture in the same inexplicable ways. "What the system doesn't know about elephants: if an elephant stamps on a mouse, the mouse survives. . . . Only larger creatures get crushed by the elephant's foot. Field mice, however, survive." This field mouse, the artist-Jew, is the hero of the novel's title.

WELL-WRITTEN and engaging in its ideas, this novel steers an uneven course between comedy and high seriousness. "At its best," Irving Howe has written, "the political novel generates such intense heat that the ideas it appropriates are melted into its movement and fused with the emotions of its characters." Little such fusion occurs here. Some of the characters are mere occasions for aspects of social history, and even the hero, though witty and interesting, seems emotionally underdone, too flat for the fictional load he must carry. Isakovsky's return to Moscow, the intended climax of the plot, is particularly unaffecting, more a fixed consequence of the story-line than the decision of an autonomous character.

In fact, at this concluding point, the very idea of the book becomes treacherous. Having defied the KGB, Isakovsky goes home—as if facing the music in the form of Soviet officialdom were a viable way of testing one's human mettle. Cohen may have wished here to avoid one form of cheap appeal—to Jewish nationalist revivalism, to anti-Communist politics—which a decision to defect on Isakovsky's part might perhaps have seemed to serve. But he has dedicated this novel to the memories of Isaac Babel, Peretz Markish, and Osip Mandelstam, three of Soviet Russia's illustrious writer-victims; how then can he regard the act of returning to that land as a sign of artistic or personal manhood? In fact, the bravado of the conclusion ignores the book's own endorsement of limited, ironic victories in favor of an older romantic tradition of the artist as defiant martyr; but then, conveniently terminating the action, the book does not have to deal with its consequences. *A Hero in His Time* would have done better to heed the wisdom offered by Efraim Sevela—that the match between the regulating domination of the state and the moral force exerted by the individual artistic conscience is an uneven one at best, and that (as Yuri Isakovsky also seems to know), the pen is mightier than the sword only within its own proper dominion.

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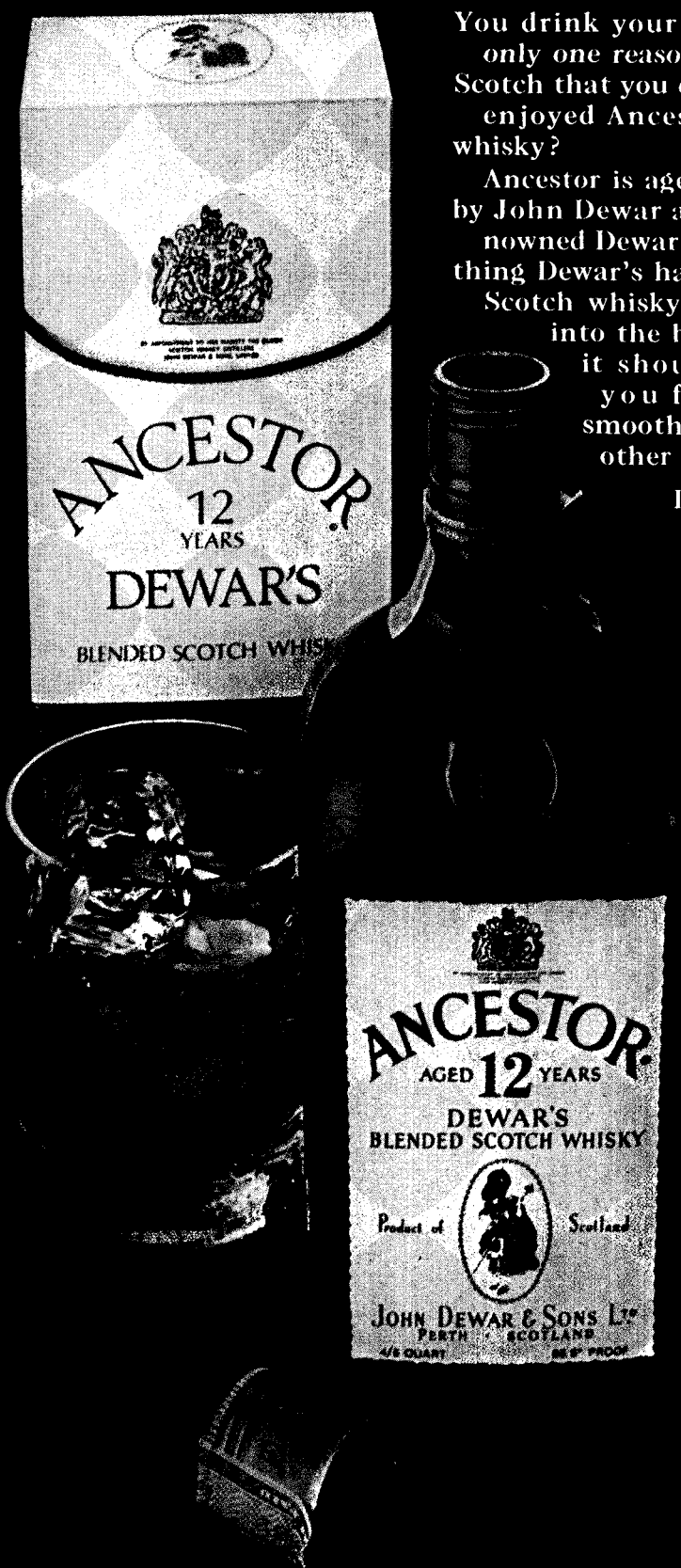

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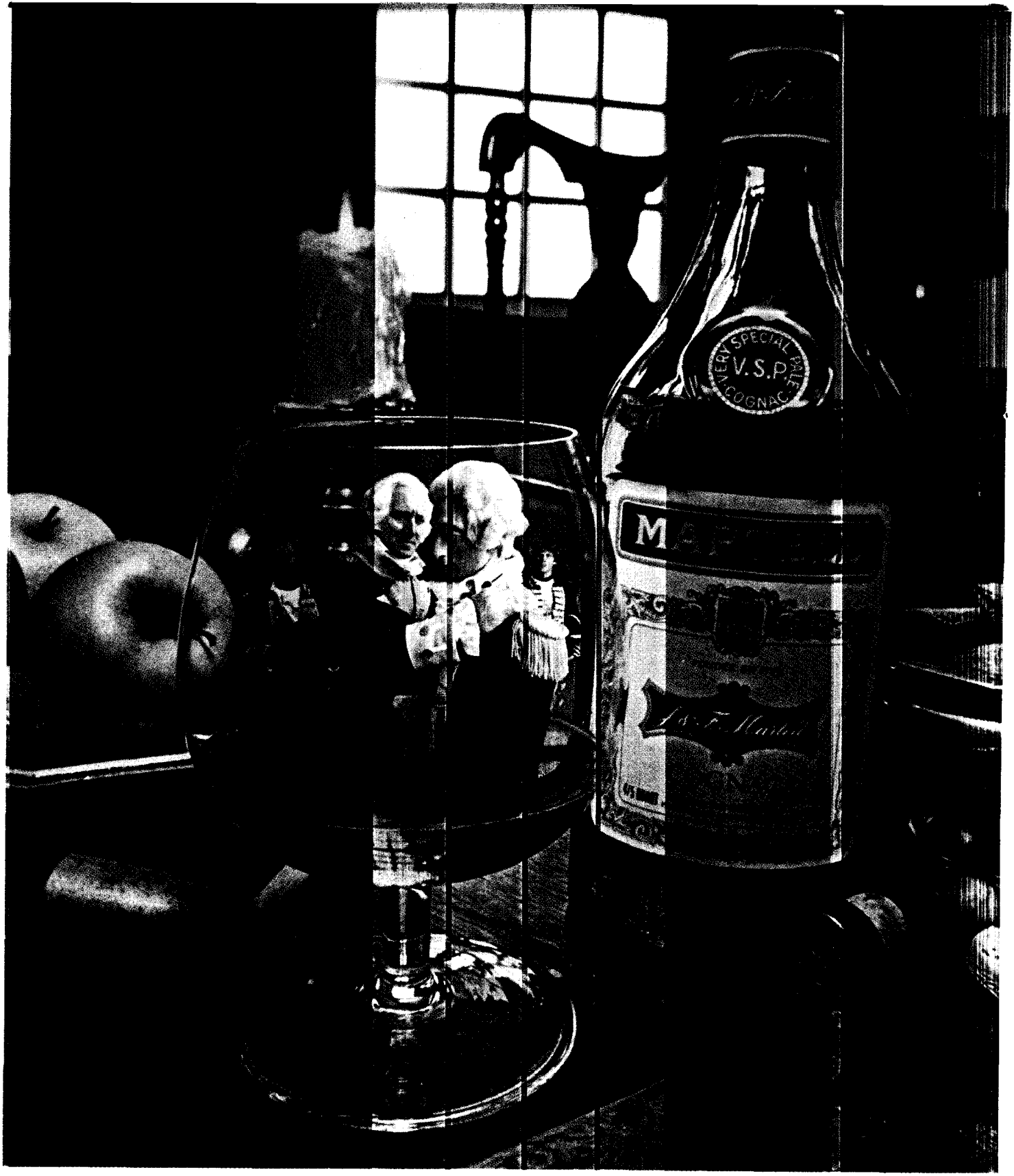

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